If you would like to learn more about Wisconsin hospitals connecting to the communities they serve, visit www.wiservepoint.org.
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Agnesian HealthCare, Fond du Lac

*Courtesy van service meeting the needs of the underserved*

Always an active person, Lorraine Baudry found herself unable to drive last year after an accident resulted in the amputation of her foot. With no family close by, the Fond du Lac resident had to figure out a way to get back and forth to both therapy and her doctors’ appointments. Enter Agnesian Health Care’s Courtesy Van Service.

From infants to the elderly, the van brings patients to and from any Agnesian HealthCare appointments. “It is so good; so wonderful. It really came at a time when I needed it most,” says Baudry.

In addition to finding much-needed transportation, Baudry also found a trusted friend in driver Jane Galligan, who picks her up right at the door, helps her to the van and makes sure she arrives safely at her destination. Galligan even helps coordinate Baudry’s appointments to ensure availability of the van service. “She treats me with the most utmost and courtesy that any individual could expect to receive,” adds Baudry.

A free service funded by the St. Agnes Hospital Foundation, the courtesy van is another way Agnesian HealthCare is serving the needs of our community…and making access to health care possible for patients such as Baudry.
Jayme Waters started work as a lab technician at Consultants Laboratory in June 2005, just one month after graduating from Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC). Thanks to a learning partnership between the college and lab, the local student was more than prepared for her new job.

MPTC and Consultants Laboratory collaborated together to create a two-year Clinical Laboratory Technician program. Waters was a member of the first class, and she states that the course’s combination of classroom education with laboratory clinicals provided valuable real world experience.

“My clinical experience as a student at Consultants Laboratory gave me behind-the-scenes experience that went beyond classroom training,” she says. “During clinicals, we learned first hand about actual diseases, the flow of the lab and how everyone works together. This helped prepare me for a job after college and made for a smooth transition at work.”
Amery Regional Medical Center, Amery

**ARMC educates community about drug abuse**

Amery Regional Medical Center, a not-for-profit organization located in Amery, Wisconsin, aims to provide accessible, comprehensive, quality health care and to promote the health and wellness of their communities. ARMC’s commitment to their patients goes beyond diagnosis and treatment; it continues into the hearts of their communities through service and dedication.

Working with local and county organizations to educate the community on important health issues like drug abuse, remains a vital function of Amery Regional Medical Center. Methamphetamines have become a large-scale concern not only throughout the state of Wisconsin, but also throughout the nation. Since ARMC collaborates with the local county sheriff’s department and is a member of the county’s methamphetamine coalition group, they continue to be well informed and proactive on health concerns that affect the community.

Through coordinated efforts with the school districts and county, ARMC was able to educate over 800 people on the dangers of methamphetamines and other drug abuse during one presentation in year 2005. In 2006, ARMC assisted in coordinating another educational community presentation with local county officials that spanned across three counties informing over 1000 people on the effects of methamphetamines. Because of education initiatives like these, the state of Wisconsin has realized a 31% reduction in methamphetamine activity as reported by the Department of Justice.
Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau

Aspirus spearheads project to improve health care access, quality

Aspirus took the lead in a successful $6.5 million project to ensure the continued health of the UW Wausau Family Medicine Residency program, which is the single greatest reason communities in the Wausau area have access to excellent primary care services.

Since 1978, the UW Wausau Family Medicine Residency has graduated 139 family physicians.

- 40 percent have established practices in the region
- 66 percent have established practices in Wisconsin
- 65 percent of family doctors on staff at Aspirus Wausau Hospital are graduates
- 40 percent serve rural communities

So when it became clear that the residency program needed a new home, Aspirus donated a total of $3.5 million in land, cash and bond proceeds to kick-start the project. The Aspirus Health Foundation also spearheaded a successful $3 million capital campaign to garner support from the regional medical and lay communities.

On May 30, 2007, about 50 community and health care leaders celebrated the groundbreaking of the 27,000-square-foot Aspirus Medical Education Center, or AMEC. When complete, the facility will provide the following community benefits:

- Continued success of the UW Wausau Family Medicine Residency program, which is:
  - The region’s main source of primary care physicians
  - An accessible provider of care to anyone in need
  - A valuable source of medical education
- Community health classes, workshops, forums and a reference library
- Continuing education for regional health care professionals.

Brian Gumness, Executive Director of the B.A. and Esther Greenheck Foundation, is an enthusiastic supporter of the project. “We decided as a board to support this project because we believe it will help create a better health care environment in north central Wisconsin,” he said. “If we can train and educate our own health care workforce, the community will benefit. Doctors will be accustomed to this area and have a better understanding of the people they care for.”

Todd Nicklaus, project supporter and Chairman of River Valley State Bank, agrees that the project has long-term benefit. “I think the AMEC is important because it provides a foundation for continued high-quality health care,” he said. “It will ensure the continued success of the local residency program, which turns out a high percentage of the primary care physicians serving the area. Strong primary care acts as the building blocks for the entire health care system.”

By bringing the new Medical Education Center to reality, Aspirus is living its maxim: Passion for excellence. Compassion for people.
Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau

Aspirus helps HEAL the community

In 2003, the Marathon County Health Department asked Aspirus to help pay for an in-depth assessment of the health of Marathon County residents. Aspirus donated $15,000 and nearly 200 hours of time to lead and complete the 2003 Marathon County Health Assessment, which identified six key community health priorities.

Arguably the most serious of these community health risks was “Obesity and Related Disorders,” and Aspirus Wausau Hospital’s Sue Gantner and Rick Nevers helped form an action committee to address it. As co-chairs of the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, Gantner and Nevers spearheaded activities designed to increase exercise and improve the diets of Marathon County residents.

Since 2003, Aspirus has invested $95,000 and provided steadfast leadership in addressing the problem of obesity and inactivity in Marathon County.

“This is primary prevention at its best,” Gantner said. “It isn’t about disease detection; it’s about keeping people healthy.”

Today, HEAL is a strong coalition of more than 90 community members working in worksites and schools to bring about healthy change.

HEAL Worksites collaborates with businesses to improve work environments and keep employees healthy. This group helped develop a Worksite Wellness Resource Kit, which is now available to employers throughout the state.

HEAL Schools works with local schools to complete the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention School Health Index and identify areas for healthy change.

In 2006, the UW Department of Medicine and Public Health took notice of HEAL’s success and offered the coalition a “Footprints to Health” grant. The coalition continues its mission today through:

• Work in seven school neighborhoods to increase physical activity and healthy food choices with innovative programs such as the Active Family Challenge.
• The creation of an Active Family Resource Guide outlining recreational and exercise resources in the area.
• A Primary Care Assessment Survey to identify the ways family physicians communicate obesity guidelines to patients. This will culminate in a CME conference for primary care professionals in September 2007.
• The identification of Safe Routes to School to encourage walking and biking.

Julie Willems Van Dijk, Health Officer for the Marathon County Health Department, believes the key to HEAL’s success is that its leadership has engaged the community in a multi-pronged approach to combating obesity. Interventions have been designed that address behavior at all levels.

“Sue Gantner and Rick Nevers have been incredibly valuable leaders and have helped the community see the expensive and harmful effects obesity has on health,” she said. “They truly understand that solving the problem of obesity requires cultural change and they have the staying power to make such change happen.”
That staying power will be vital, as the group’s work is just beginning. Through HEAL’s involvement in a newly-formed Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission subcommittee for bicyclists and pedestrians, **HEAL Pathways** is helping create a 10-year plan for a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian path system.
Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay

Trauma team teaches perils of alcohol to college students

Having witnessed the sometimes-tragic aftermath of excessive drinking, members of the Aurora BayCare Medical Center trauma team shared real emergency room examples with St. Norbert College students.

The talk was part of the trauma team’s mission to educate the community about choices and actions that can prevent accidents, injuries and even death. They met with students to discuss how much alcohol is considered to be lethal, how it affects the body, what the legal limits are and the equivalent number of drinks that amounts to for men and women. They also discussed date-rape drugs and other substance abuse.

Tom Bergmann, RN, MSN, Lisa Koehler, RN, and Alan Matzke, EMTP, were the presenters. Each shared their personal experiences in treating and working with young adults whose alcohol consumption led to emergency room admissions. To accommodate the students’ many questions, an open and frank dialogue followed the presentation.
Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay

Other community activities

Staff at Aurora BayCare Medical Center (ABMC) provide a full calendar of educational programs both on campus and out in the community. Their health education series covers the full complement of childbirth preparation, breastfeeding and family-focused classes, including one called “Big Kids New Babies,” to free infant/child CPR and Asthma School classes that were presented to parents during “Back to School” day at Franklin Middle School. ABMC staff also co-instructed a self-help class on arthritis for bi-lingual teachers in Spanish over a two-day period.

For the Youth Apprenticeship Program through the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, Aurora BayCare Medical Center provides high school students the ability to work hands-on in a hospital/clinic setting to learn about health care careers. Some work as CNAs on a medical/surgical floor and others rotate positions in rehab, diagnostics and medical records. Each area has a designated mentor to work one-on-one with the high school students. Students who participate in the program have the opportunity to earn college credits.

Eight staff members from the ABMC Surgery Center East, representing ABMC, picked up trash along their two-mile portion of Highway 41.
Thirty-four Aurora parish nurses work in 55 faith communities throughout southeast Wisconsin, providing medical and spiritual comfort as well as health education and counseling for the family as well as the patient. In 2005, Aurora parish nurses served 13,039 individuals who needed outreach services, and provided health education and screenings to an additional 35,091 people.

Parish nurses identify and promote opportunities to enhance the relationship of faith and health within the context of the values, beliefs and practices of the faith community. They nurture the client’s faith system and practices that enhance health, such as forgiveness, meditation and prayer.

Parish nurses are health educators, providing members with information on health conditions, treatments and prevention. Parish nurses are health counselors who listen and respond to health concerns of individuals and their families. Concerns such as medications, blood pressure, nutrition, weight control and end-of-life issues are covered.

Parish nurses are a referral source for health services. They link the individual’s needs with resources in the community and assist them in accessing these services.

Parish nurses are advocates for people who have difficulty in receiving adequate health services. They may accompany individuals to hospitals and visits to medical professionals.

“The challenges of our community can not be addressed by a single organization. We are blessed to have a number of partnerships and relationships that work together to find solutions to the needs of our neighborhoods. Aurora works collaboratively with us to encourage and support ministries of health and healing.”

Our longtime parish nurse, Lisa Neal, holistically focuses on the promotion of health within the context of the values, beliefs and practices of our faith.

“It’s a partnership that helps to keep our members well and our faith strong.”

Bishop Sedgwick Daniels, Holy Redeemer Institutional Church of God in Christ, Milwaukee
Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee

Aurora Parish Nursing

To encourage and support ministries of health and healing in partnership with local faith communities, Aurora’s Parish Nurse Program employs registered nurses and nurse practitioners. Within southeastern Wisconsin, 25 parish nurses practice in 35 faith communities. They work in cooperation with congregations to assess and link clients with resources within the congregation, Aurora’s integrated health system, and other community resources. Their primary focus is health promotion, education, maintenance of wholistic health and prevention. For example:

Linda is a Nurse Practitioner who works with the pastoral staff of a downtown Milwaukee church where she participates in the ongoing transformation of the faith community into a source of health and healing.

The church has a robust and faithful congregation. As its full-time parish nurse, Linda combines the practice of faith with the practice of nursing in a way that embraces the spiritual, psychological, physical, and social dimensions of each person who enters its doors.

Each day in Linda’s week has a different focus. On Sunday, Linda provides health education during church services. A teen who heard her speak on child-abuse prevention was inspired to ask Linda for her presentation materials. By using them in his speech class, he not only earned an “A”, he educated the other teens in his class on this very important topic.

Two or three days each week, Linda and the pastor visit homes and nursing homes to care for those who are unable to attend services or other programs at the church. Each Tuesday during the weekly Adult Center held at the church, aging parishioners who once were active in the workforce gather. It is a day for sharing, caring and positive reinforcement of faith as Linda monitors their blood pressure and blood sugar levels and teaches them how to maintain optimal wellness when their readings fall outside the normal range. As they struggle with the complexities of retirement, aging and diminishing resources, many are keeping their chronic medical conditions under control, demonstrating that even in the presence of challenges and disease, their sense of well-being can be maintained.

The Wednesday group has different needs. They come for the church’s Food Pantry and Hot Meal Program and stay for Linda’s AODA sessions, which she is specially certified to conduct. Many who attend have endured insurmountable loss. They struggle with bad choices they have made and addictions to substances that numb them. Some have had encounters with the criminal justice system in the past that now preclude them from securing the kind of gainful employment by which to start their lives over.

But Linda is always there, ministering to body, mind and spirit, and so they come. Many have come to trust Linda so much that they are developing a good track record of attending regularly and complying with the recovery programs through which she guides them. Those who maintain sobriety – and many do – are eligible to work, for pay, at the church’s Food Pantry and Meal Program. This work serves as a launch pad for learning about nutrition and developing employable skills, suggesting that even in the absence of a cure, healing can occur.

As each recovers a measure of health and quality of life, relative to their daily challenges and struggles, they recover their dignity and sense of self-worth, demonstrating that it is possible to achieve wholeness in, with, and through the community of faith in which parish nurses serve.
Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee

*Aurora Pharmacies Conduct Health Fair Events*

Each year, Aurora pharmacists conduct a series of Health Fair events at their Aurora Pharmacy site. The pharmacies are located throughout eastern Wisconsin. Formerly known as “Diabetes Days,” each four-hour Health Fair is free to the public. The events provide screening for blood sugar, high blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Select sites also include bone-density screenings. At each site, pharmacists conduct a “brown bag review” with attendees who are welcome to bring their prescription and over-the-counter medications. This enables people to have a refresher course from the pharmacist on what the medications are for, how they work, proper dosages, and any potential interactions that could occur between the medications.

More than 2,200 individuals participated in 85 of these events during 2006.
Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee

*Aurora VNA provides record 100,000 flu shots in 2005-2006 flu season*

Aurora Visiting Nurse Association nurses administered a record 100,000-plus flu shots throughout eastern Wisconsin during the 2005-2006 flu season.

Flu immunizations are vital to communities because each year approximately 36,000 people die of influenza in America, and more than 220,000 people are hospitalized with flu or complications from the flu.

“Vaccinations are particularly important for people with chronic illness or who are over age 50,” said Lisa Taylor, RN, coordinator of Aurora VNA flu clinics. “Aurora VNA nurses were thrilled to reach so many people and to make such an impact on the health of Wisconsinites. Our staff put in many long hours to achieve this record.”

Aurora VNA traditionally holds more than 350 public flu clinics each season throughout eastern Wisconsin. For information about this year’s flu clinics, log on to [www.aurora.org/flu](http://www.aurora.org/flu)
Aurora Health Care and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, Milwaukee

*Building tomorrow’s workforce*

Aurora Health Care and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare established a highly successful in-house surgical technician training program that met recruitment needs for both health systems. According to Rhonda Taylor Parris, director of workforce planning at Aurora, “We both had a shortage of surgical techs in our Milwaukee metro hospitals; we needed 10-12 people each. By working together and being innovative with support funding from the Private Industry Council, we have developed a system that has allowed current employees to both progress on their career ladders and fill our vacancies with people we know.”

Current employees apply for the program that allows them to complete training in just 10 months by going to school during their 40-hour workweek.

“Their job becomes learning—we continue to pay them a $10/hour stipend with full benefits,” Taylor Parris notes.

Graduates are first in line for open surgical tech jobs, and are guaranteed a position in their respective organization if no openings are available when they finish the program. All the graduates—30 in the first two classes—have been hired as surgical techs between the two systems. Next year, the program will continue with Aurora, Froedtert and Columbia St. Mary’s.
Medication errors account for an estimated 7,000 deaths annually in the United States. Over 90 percent of Americans aged 65 or over take prescription medications and half of them are taking five or more different medicines.

The Walworth County Patient Safety Council was formed in July 2005 to study ways of improving medication safety for patients in clinic settings. The team developed and implemented tools to improve communication between patients and health care providers about medications. Because older persons are particularly susceptible to medication-related events due to their high rate of chronic disease and medication use, the efforts were targeted to those 55 years and older. Aurora Medical Group clinics involved in the study were located in the Walworth County communities of Delavan, East Troy, Elkhorn, Lake Geneva, and Walworth.

The Walworth County Patient Safety Council, consisting of 11 patients and 12 health care professionals (including representatives of the local Department on Aging and other health care agencies), worked together with the community and two partners – Consumers Advancing Patient Safety and Midwest Airlines - to develop a medication bag and a personal medication list. In addition to these tools, educational programs were geared for a wide audience of health care professionals and included information on patient-centered care, tools for effective communication, promoting self-management among their patients, and changes to clinic processes to allow more time for medication review by the staff.

Over 16,000 medication lists and 7,500 medication bags were distributed by health care providers at Aurora Medical Group clinics in Walworth County and through community education programs. The result: The key measurement for project success was the accuracy of the clinic medication list. In 2005, prior to the project, only 69% of the clinic medications lists were accurate and complete. After implementation of patient and health care provider tools, the accuracy of the clinic medication list improved to 81% – a 17% improvement.

Establishing medication safety practices will become even more important as Baby Boomers age. They or their caregivers will need clear guidelines about prescription safety. Estimates show that fifty percent of the population 85 or better already has some form of dementia and that figure will likely increase. The safety council’s research concluded that clear and consistent communication between the patient and the provider is a key element of ensuring medication safety.
Aurora Medical Center, Hartford

Fit Kids, Fit Families

Fit Kids Fit Families responds to the emotional and physical needs of children to help them gain control of their weight and lead healthier lives. It is a partnership between Aurora Medical Center in Hartford and the Kettle Moraine YMCA, along with the Jackson/West Bend School District, which provides free space in the Jackson Elementary School gym. Community partners referring to the program include health care professionals in primary care, pediatrics, family practice, internal medicine, behavioral health, as well as elementary, middle, and high school administrators, teachers and nurses, and parents. The connections fostered by these referral sources are instrumental in reaching the goal of reducing childhood obesity and teaching continuous lifestyle wellness.

The program was launched in 2005. An advisory committee consisting of public health personnel, local pediatricians, nurse practitioners, exercise specialists and a parent and youth representative met to review the project. Parents with overweight children participated in focus groups to identify their needs, as well as resources and obstacles to prevent and address childhood obesity. Parent partners stressed the importance of fostering individualized and family care while focusing on nutrition, fitness, improved health and a healthy lifestyle. Focus groups with children identified their needs and issues.

A 12-week curriculum was developed and project evaluation tools were created along with outreach tools. The first Fit Kids Fit Families session started on April 11, 2005 in Washington County with eleven youths and their parents participating.

Outcomes include:

- 91% completed primary phase
- Nutrition – 80% met
- Exercise – 90% met
- Habits Inventory
  - Youth report -- 60% increased scores representing healthier lifestyle behaviors
  - Parent report – 75% increased scores representing healthier lifestyle behaviors
- Maintained or improved BMI – 90% met
- Decrease body circumference – 90% met
- Increased physical activity – 100% met
- Decreased sedentary activity – 88% met
- Self-esteem improvements measured by Rosenberg self esteem scale – 90% met

During 2006, the program was replicated in Waukesha County at the Oconomowoc YMCA, with a total of 100 children and their families participating in Washington and Waukesha Counties.

Fit Kids Fit Families is funded through a grant provided by the UW School of Medicine and Public Health from the Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future. Aurora Health Care provides program leadership and staff through in-kind and financial support.
Confused, scared, and upset, Carrie (not her real name) sat before a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner trying to put into perspective what happened to her just a few hours before. Sexual assault isn’t an easy subject to discuss, but at Aurora Medical Center in Kenosha, the establishment of a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program is an important step in helping victims deal with the trauma of sexual assault.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner is a nationally recognized program that features specially trained registered nurses who offer care to sexual assault survivors. The nurses work with other emergency staff, social services, law enforcement, district attorney offices, and other community agencies.

“My incident wasn’t handled as easy as they make it look on TV,” said Carrie. “The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners helped me the most.”

Carrie learned about the program after her mom spotted an article detailing it in the local newspaper. The story appeared the day after she was assaulted. It was a chaotic scene that morning—the details still remain sketchy in Carrie’s mind—but she clearly remembers what happened when she entered the hospital.

“I felt the most comfortable as I could, given my situation,” she said. “The nurses showed great empathy. They treated you as the victim, not the other way around. I felt like a person.”

Carrie said the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner made her feel comfortable and that helped in recounting the details. She said the nurse always let her know what was going on, explained in detail each next step, and answered her questions.

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program in Kenosha also partners with Pathways of Courage and other agencies to help provide a continuum of care that begins when the patient walks in the door and continues throughout the recovery period. In Carrie’s case, Pathways of Courage and UW-Parkside were involved with helping her put her life back together.

A key benefit of the SANE program is that the survivor works with a nurse who understands the emotional and physical complexities involved with sexual assault. Nurse examiners are on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day. They receive extensive training that covers medical forensic care for evidence-gathering, post-traumatic rape syndrome, venereal disease, and the use of a colposcopic instrument that takes pictures of injuries to the anatomy for documentation in court.

The statistics suggest that there is a need for this type of resource in the community. In 2006, Aurora Medical Center in Kenosha treated 94 patients. The program is also offered at nearby Aurora hospitals, including Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, which treated 57 patients in 2006, and Aurora Memorial Hospital of Burlington where 31 cases were recorded.
Aurora Medical Center, Oshkosh

Sponsorship with YMCA: “Drop Zone”

Aurora Medical Center-Oshkosh (AMCO) completed its first year as a sponsor of Drop Zone, an after-school program held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:15 to 5:00 p.m. Drop Zone is a place where kids are “dropped off” to burn off some of their after-school energy before going home to dinner and homework and be rewarded for good behavior. For school-age children, Drop Zone offers organized activities in a safe environment, free to members and offered to children on a day pass.

Drop Zone is a supervised program that offers floor hockey, ice-skating, T-ball, flag football, crafts, dodge ball and team-building activities. Drop Zone averages between 12 and 20 children for every after-school session. The program is so beneficial that AMCO will continue its commitment for this coming year.
Aurora Medical Center, Oshkosh
Aurora Behavioral Health Services in Fond du Lac, Neenah and Oshkosh sponsor The Great Jeans Giveaway

The Great Jeans Giveaway was held in 2006 to promote healthy attitudes about body image.

The event was launched with a free seminar, “Be Comfortable in Your Genes,” led by an Aurora psychotherapist and conducted in the evening to accommodate more people. Throughout the week in Fond du Lac, Neenah and Oshkosh, community members cast their gently used “skinny jeans” into containers at local Aurora Health Center facilities and in return received encouragement to “change the size of their jeans to fit their genes.” They also received educational materials about the health risks of eating disorders and invitations to free, confidential eating-disorder screenings offered at Aurora Behavioral Health offices in Oshkosh. Individuals identified at-risk were directed to appropriate behavioral health services.

In a culture that puts pressure on people to be thin, as many as 10 million females and one million males struggle with the devastating and life-threatening effects of eating disorders, anorexia and bulimia. Another 25 million battle binge-eating disorder. Their health risks include high blood pressure, Type II diabetes mellitus and high cholesterol.

The event sparked the interest of local schools and the Fond du Lac Department of Social Services, each of which asked Aurora Behavioral Health Services to provide educational programs in their venues on eating disorders. Jeans collected were donated to the Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Center and Salvation Army.
Aurora Medical Center, Oshkosh
Living Healthy Community Clinic

The Living Healthy Community Clinic provides health care to uninsured residents of Winnebago County. It is a community collaboration among Aurora Health Care, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh College of Nursing, other health care providers and local agencies in the county. In 2005, the clinic served nearly 650 uninsured individuals and had 3,621 patient visits, providing just over 3,900 prescriptions. Local health systems provide lab services on a rotating basis.

“We’re unique because we provide all lab services, basic diagnostic testing and medications to help uninsured people receive a more complete level of care,” said Leona Whitman, MPA, of the UW-Oshkosh School of Nursing and clinic director. “We could not exist without help from Aurora and others in our community. All the major health care systems come to the table to provide support to people who, without the clinic, would have few options available to them. Aurora and our other partners have demonstrated how competing health systems can work together to meet a critical community need in a way that is helping people to better health and helping to positively impact the costs of that care. The clinic also offers students from the College of Nursing unique experiences that are not available in a classroom setting. It is experience that better prepares them for their clinic and hospital work after graduation.”
Aurora has worked with 36 communities in eastern Wisconsin to conduct health surveys to:
- Gather specific data on behavioral and lifestyle habits of the adult population. Selected information was also collected about respondent household
- Gather data on the prevalence of risk factors and disease conditions existing within the adult population
- Compare, where appropriate and available, health data of residents to state and national measurements

In the Fox Valley, Aurora partnered with Winnebago and Outagamie counties and with the city of Oshkosh. The surveys were conducted through a grant provided by Aurora. The reports are part of a comprehensive survey of eastern Wisconsin commissioned in partnership with local health departments to identify areas of greatest need.

The extensive measurement of the state of residents’ health and lifestyles helps identify the most critical local health issues.
In 2006, a second patient transport van made it possible for Aurora Medical Center and Aurora clinics in Manitowoc County to complete 972 arrivals and 1,165 departures through its free transportation service. The free service is offered to patients who need transportation for appointments to and from Aurora Health Care facilities within Manitowoc County, yet have no other means of transportation and are able to exit and enter their dwelling independently or have made arrangements to have someone assist them. The van logged a total of 19,200 miles, with local volunteers making the drives.

In 2007, Aurora expects these numbers to increase. Funding for the van was made possible through proceeds from the sixth annual Golf Classic and donations through the Vince Lombardi Cancer Clinic Foundation Fund.

The transport van ensures that all patients needing assistance will make their appointments on time, rather than missing their appointments altogether.
A $4,200 grant to the Southfield Townhouses Neighborhood Network Learning Center has provided playground equipment for kids in the 99-unit low-income housing complex.

The Learning Center, which is nearly two years old, helps give residents Internet access and conducts classes on a variety of community education topics. The Center also provides tutoring and after-school help for kids.

But until the playground was erected last month, there had been no easy access to physical activity for all the kids at Southfield and in the neighborhood.

“There was not a lot for kids to do,” said Theresa Zuege-Halvorsen, director of the Learning Center. “We want to work on their motor development and keep them moving, and the kids really didn’t have anything within walking distance to use. This is such a good addition to the area.”
Aurora Medical Center of Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

Gun safety

A $2,000 grant to the Two Rivers Police Department was used to purchase roughly 500 gun locks, which officers distributed to the public in two separate events at Aurora Medical Center. Gun locks prevent accidental discharging of a firearm, yet only two in five gun owners lock their guns. Studies show that children are more likely to be killed by a loaded gun in their home than by an intruder, a sobering reality that catches people’s attention.

“Gun locks are extremely important, because an unlocked gun is a problem in the making,” said David Hartman, captain of the Two Rivers Police Department. “Through Aurora we were able to get gun locks to give away to people and stop gun problems before they happen. It’s a very good program.”
Aurora Medical Center of Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

Athletic physicals

Aurora Medical Center’s sports medicine department offers pre-participation sports physicals for grade school and high school athletes at multiple sites each July and August.

These comprehensive physicals exceed WIAA requirements by including:

- A health screening by a primary care physician;
- Evaluation of muscle/skeletal issues by an orthopedic surgeon;
- Vision examination by an optometrist or ophthalmologist;
- Interactive stations facilitated by certified athletic trainers to evaluate flexibility and strength;
- A video-based program to proactively diagnose athletes who might be at risk for ACL injuries through patented Dartfish technology;
- Functional assessments will be conducted. Athletes will receive their results via email to show how they measure up against national averages.

The cost is $30, which is donated to the athlete’s school athletic department.
Aurora Medical Center of Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

Public health surveys

Aurora has worked with 36 communities in eastern Wisconsin, including Manitowoc County, to conduct health surveys to:

- Gather specific data on behavioral and lifestyle habits of the adult population. Selected information was also collected about respondent household
- Gather data on the prevalence of risk factors and disease conditions existing within the adult population
- Compare, where appropriate and available, health data of residents to state and national measurements.

The surveys were conducted through a grant provided by Aurora. The reports are part of a comprehensive survey of eastern Wisconsin commissioned in partnership with local health departments to identify areas of greatest need.

The extensive measurement of the state of residents’ health and lifestyles helps identify the most critical local health issues.

“We’ve utilized the survey results to focus on physical activity, nutrition, teen pregnancy prevention, substance abuse, injury prevention, tobacco use and access to dental care,” said Amy Wergin, R.N., public health nurse manager for the Manitowoc County Health Department. “The survey helps us to focus limited health resources in areas that can have the greatest impact on our residents. Aurora is an important partner in our efforts to improve the health and well-being of our residents because we do not have the resources to conduct these health surveys on our own. Aurora is helping us to tackle local health needs that can truly make a difference in the quality of life for people of all ages in Manitowoc County.”
Aurora Medical Center of Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

Other community benefits

In addition to diabetes education and support groups at Aurora Medical Center Manitowoc County (AMCMC), Diabetes Alert Day has become a very popular community event for residents of Manitowoc County. For the past 11 years, on the 4th Tuesday in March, AMCMC has hosted the event. The overarching goal is to create awareness about diabetes and diabetes care. The event, which is free of charge, attracted 122 people in 2006 who came to hear a presentation by an Aurora endocrinologist and to visit educational displays.

To support workforce development efforts, staff from AMCMC participate in the Annual Career Expo for high school sophomores in Manitowoc County. Students choose to attend three career clusters at the Expo. AMCMC provided four panelists for three days to encourage today’s youth to consider and pursue health careers.

To further promote health care careers to young people, the Health Careers Summer Camp is a five-day program held in Sheboygan and Manitowoc Counties. The camp provides an opportunity for high school students to experience firsthand the challenges, opportunities and rewards of health professions. AMCMC invited the 20 students to their facility to participate in activities in respiratory therapy, athletic training, and the medical helicopter.

At the Aurora Mishicot Clinic, AMCMC physicians and therapists provide WIAA Physicals for athletes at Mishicot Middle and High School. All proceeds are donated to the school. Monies raised are used for ordering medical equipment for the upcoming school year.
Finding ways to recruit young people into the health care professions is crucial for providing health care services in the future. The Bureau of Health Professions projects that the number of health care jobs will need to grow significantly to meet tomorrow’s health care demands. That trend is especially applicable in rural areas.

About nine years ago, Burlington High School surveyed its graduates to determine if something was missing in their education that limited their post-secondary experience. The students frequently indicated that an anatomy/physiology course was needed to assist those pursuing positions in the health care field.

The hospital responded by assembling a team of Aurora Health Care professionals that included physicians, nurses, laboratory technicians, and other departments, such as respiratory therapy, imaging, quality and education and business development, to partner with and develop a course for Burlington High School that combines both observation and hands-on activities. Students enrolled in the Anatomy & Physiology class are able to access the hospital lab where they perform their own urinalysis, perform individual respiratory testing, and observe surgeries in the hospital’s operating rooms.

The involvement of physicians and professional staff is an integral part of the program, as they also go to classes at the high school and share knowledge and experience about specific topics the students are studying. The Aurora physicians and other health professionals share their personal stories of how they became interested in health care, the educational paths they took, and highlight what opportunities exist in the field today. The students are provided with job descriptions and salary structures to help gain a better understanding of their field of interest.

Since the program’s inception, nearly 250 students have participated.
Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa

The story of Jason

Every day the mental health professionals of Aurora Psychiatric Hospital respond to the unique needs of individuals dealing with mental health issues. Jason (not his real name), now age 19, is one.

He was diagnosed with mental illness at the age of 12. It had proven too much for his family, who eventually abandoned him. But teachers who wanted to see him finish high school had taken him in. Although their intentions were noble, they apparently did not have the capacity to deal with the challenges of his mental illness. They, too, abandoned Jason, leaving him alone, defenseless and without an advocate at the doorstep of Aurora Psychiatric Hospital.

Often, homeless shelters are a good option for feeding, clothing and housing people who are abandoned. But Jason was vulnerable and would not survive in that kind of setting.

Even though it was not a permanent solution, Jason was admitted to Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, which provided shelter, food and a team of care providers who set out to find an appropriate “home” for Jason and a better way for him to build a life for himself.

The average length of stay for inpatients at the hospital is seven days. Jamie and the case managers set to work on finding a permanent residence for Jason. They pursued guardianship with the county where Jason had been living, but that process dragged on. However, the County agreed to supply transportation for Jason to get from the hospital to the high school he had been attending. But after some issues arose, the school washed their hands of Jason.

In the end, the guardianship matter did not work, either. Jason stayed at Aurora Psychiatric Hospital 46 days before Jamie and her team found a residence on Milwaukee’s south side.

But even then, there was a glitch. The facility where Jason could live and be cared for would not take him without a 30-day supply of his prescription medications.

So the staff at Aurora Psychiatric Hospital reached into the Aurora Essential Medication Fund – a fund supported wholly by Aurora employees who contribute through the annual Aurora Employee Partnership Campaign. The medications were purchased and provided to Jason and he was admitted to the community-based facility where he now resides.
Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa

Behavioral Health Issues in the School

Aurora Psychiatric Hospital offers extensive continuing education to school social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors, nurses and educators who deal with behavioral health issues in the school setting. Behavioral Health Issues in the School is a series of conferences provided free of charge and approved for two contact hours. Since the program was launched in 2002, Aurora Psychiatric Hospital has provided vitally important continuing education to over 1,000 professionals in the greater Milwaukee area. With topics ranging from depression and suicide prevention to current trends in drug and alcohol use, this series offers much-needed information on behavioral health illnesses and the resulting issues that may have impact on schools, while also providing skills that can be used in the school setting.
Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa

Aurora Behavioral Health Services (ABHS) training programs

At Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, ABHS staff engages in structured, systematic training for graduate students in social work and psychology training programs. ABHS has the capacity to train 30 students per semester, and training opportunities include 15 different rotations available in adult services, child/adolescent services, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient programming, eating disorders, substance abuse, and neuropsychological assessment. Staff members include seven psychologists and eight Master’s level therapists. These professionals donate substantial time in supervision and clinical training, and the students receive high quality training at no cost. ABHS provides training opportunities for students from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Cardinal Stritch University, Mount Mary College, Alverno College and Marquette University.

In addition to the graduate student training, ABHS pre-doctoral psychology residents are allotted 10 to 12 hours per week of non-billable clinical activity. This allows the residents to provide high-quality clinical services at no additional charge to the patient. Residents are currently providing services on the consultation/liaison psychiatry service, eating disorders intensive outpatient program, adult intensive outpatient program, neuropsychology service, bariatric surgery clinic, and Women’s Health clinic. The residents enhance the overall quality of assessment and treatment for our patients while gaining valuable professional experience.
Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa

Workforce development for nursing students

Aurora Psychiatric Hospital provides workforce development for nursing students from Marquette University, Bryant and Stratton, and UW-Milwaukee, including both graduate students in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing and those pursuing Associate or Bachelors Degree programs. This year, the program includes 72 students from Marquette, 16 from Bryant and Stratton and one graduate student from UWM, involving over 971 hours of precepting by APH RNs.

Each student’s experience at APH familiarizes them with nursing in a Behavioral Health setting and exposes them to evidence-based treatment of mental illnesses. They develop their patient interviewing and care-planning skills and enhance their ability to see patients as whole persons with a multitude of problems, but also strengths. The students are educated on treatment philosophies that enable them to see the benefit of using structured, proven approaches to care. They are oriented to the unique facilities on the APH campus, learn charting and the most common mental health diagnoses, along with what to expect to see clinically. They are precepted through intake and assessment, inpatient adult, substance abuse, and child/adolescent programs, as well as APH’s Partial-Hospital and Day-Treatment programs. Alongside the RN, they must complete assessments, perform one-to-one interviews and education sessions with assigned patients, attend and participate in group therapy sessions, and prepare patients for discharge. Each student group also does an education project with the staff or patients each semester.
Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, Sheboygan

Care for uninsured

For those in Sheboygan and its surrounding counties who are without medical insurance, without any form of Medicare or Badgercare and who do not have the necessary funds to seek care at traditional medical facilities, The Salvation Army Red Shield Free Clinic provided medical treatment to 888 local individuals during 2006 and wrote 1,023 medical orders including prescriptions, glasses and labs.

Since adding two daytime sessions, those numbers are going up in 2007. Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center/Aurora Health Care partners with the Red Shield Clinic by providing funding to assist with prescription medications. Each clinic client is allowed up to $350 per year in paid prescription medications. Additionally, on their own time, Aurora physicians and nurses donate services to care for patients, including specialized care on a referral basis.

A young man with severe allergic reactions to almost everything in the environment and in serious need of medications and medical attention is one of the patients at the Red Shield Clinic. He has no health insurance and a less-than modest income, but with support of the Clinic is able to manage his allergies enough to enjoy some quality of life.

The Aurora Essential Medication Fund
The Aurora Essential Medication Fund in Sheboygan helps patients in need. Through a voucher arrangement with both Walgreen’s and Aurora Pharmacies, patients without jobs, insurance or resources treated at an Aurora facility and discharged from care obtain the medications they need to recover and heal.
Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, Sheboygan

Sponsorship with YMCA: Go Girl Go program

Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center sponsors the Go Girl Go program. Go Girl Go ensures that girls ages 9-14 who are not confident in their sports ability can participate comfortably in fun and healthy “girls only” activities. This sponsorship makes it possible for young girls to explore healthy eating options, learn high and low impact exercise, and address topics of interest and concern to adolescent females in a safe and secure environment.

The program is vital to adolescent girls in that it provides insight into their lives and thoughts much more than a young girl can get by confiding in a school counselor, teacher or parent. The girls are made to feel secure and comfortable in discussing their issues and asking questions of a knowledgeable professional or familiar staff member.

Aurora Sheboygan Medical Center has been a sponsor of this important program for three years. Approximately 18 girls attend each session. Three to four sessions are offered throughout the year. Pre- and post-testing demonstrates significant improvement in areas of personal growth and development and health and fitness.
Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

Aurora Sinai Medical Center’s Bread of Healing Clinic

The Bread of Healing Clinic at Cross Lutheran Church in Milwaukee was founded in 2000 by one of Aurora’s parish nurses, Rick Cesar, RN, in partnership with a medical resident at Aurora Sinai Medical Center. Rick is Aurora’s nursing supervisor for academic clinics. He explains, “Bread of Healing serves people who are trying to stay as healthy as possible. It gives them hope for their future. There is no health without hope.”

Today Bread of Healing holds clinics at two sites and serves patients who receive primary care services, free of charge, at the clinic. At any given time, 700 to 1,000 patients are active with the clinic.

This vital, volunteer-driven community resource helps patients who don’t have access to health insurance. It provides medication free of charge or assists patients in obtaining the medications and medical care that fall outside the clinic’s resources. In partnership with the University of Wisconsin Internal Medicine program, it has become a valuable teaching site that provides much-needed primary health services to a vulnerable population of working adults without access to health insurance.

Providing patients with regular primary care and follow-up for conditions such as diabetes and hypertension gives them a better chance to live healthier lives. Aurora Sinai Medical Center supports the Bread of Healing Clinic through in-kind donations, including staff time (nurses and diabetic educators), laboratory and pharmacy services.
Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

*The Healing Center*

The Healing Center was created as a natural extension of the Sexual Assault Treatment Center at Aurora Sinai Medical Center. Nearly 25 years of emergency treatment, forensics and short-term follow-up care revealed the need for a program dedicated to serving survivors of sexual assault and abuse.

Because the path to true healing is different for every survivor, a combination of specially trained counselors, advocates and volunteers help each survivor build upon inner strengths, release the shame of an abusive past and find hope and inspiration in the success of others who have gone through – and beyond – similar trauma.

Through every stage of the healing journey, traditional therapies, such as individual counseling and group-work, are complemented by a constellation of alternative modalities including art and writing workshops, massage, bodywork sessions and movement classes, tai chi and yoga. Often, these non-traditional therapies accomplish what talking alone cannot.

In their lifetimes, one in three women, and one in six men, will be sexually assaulted. Abused women use medical services at a higher rate than non-abused women. Besides medical issues, the lifelong toll on survivors is far reaching, affecting personal and professional relationships and survivors’ productivity, ability to trust, and ability to make healthy choices in all aspects of their lives.

Wanda is a survivor who has been battling addictions for years. At The Healing Center, she participates in a group called “Survivors Toward Recovery,” and is maintaining sobriety as she works to confront her truth. In her own words:

“Even with my strong belief in a higher power, I still couldn’t find the answer to why I hated myself. I feel safe at The Healing Center. It’s terrifying to admit the truth without using alcohol or drugs. Discovering the truth causes great pain. But I am learning techniques to get unstuck from emotions and flashbacks. I don’t want to pretend anymore. I need what I am getting from The Healing Center.”

Participants come from all walks of life. Although smaller in number, male survivors also participate in programs at The Healing Center.

The Healing Center was incubated by Aurora in 2001. Today, it is a freestanding agency located on Milwaukee’s near south side, supported by grants and in-kind services from Aurora Sinai Medical Center and Aurora Health Care. During 2006 The Healing Center provided 533 sexual abuse victims with free counseling, group, and advocacy services; provided intensive training to 50 peer advocates; and conducted community education at 44 events, reaching 2,030 community members. Community Partners include: Benedict Center, Mental Health Association, Latina Resource Center, CORE/El Centro, Task Force on Family Violence, community therapists and drug/alcohol counselors, Milwaukee District Attorney’s Office, Milwaukee Sensitive Crimes Division.

The Sexual Assault Treatment Center at Aurora Sinai Medical Center also is supported with a combination of in-kind support from Aurora and grants.
Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center, Milwaukee

*Aurora’s Asthma School helps Milwaukee school children deal with their disease*

Asthma is the biggest health-related reason for absenteeism in the Milwaukee Public School system. Thanks to a program initiated by the Aurora School Based Health Program and introduced to Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center Respiratory Therapy Department, an innovative delivery of asthma health care has been instituted in various Milwaukee schools.

The first asthma school was conducted in 2004 for 25 students at Sherman Multicultural School of the Arts on Milwaukee’s northwest side. Aurora St. Luke’s respiratory therapists used the American Lung Association’s Open Airways program as a framework.

Today, Aurora St. Luke’s respiratory therapists serve over 375 underserved K-8th grade children at Sherman, Urban Day, 12th, and 24th Street Schools by conducting “Asthma School” to help youngsters understand and control their disease.

The Aurora Asthma School focuses on understanding the disease and its early warning signs. The curriculum illustrates what happens to children’s bodies when an asthma attack occurs or when the illness acts up. Students learn how to identify asthma “triggers” in the home, school, and surrounding environment and appropriate techniques for controlling their disease.

Communication and collaboration between the respiratory therapists and Aurora’s school-based nursing staff helps to identify and treat children whose asthma is out of control. Therapists working in tandem with Aurora school-based nurses and nurse practitioners ensure that children will have the medications they need, since the nurse practitioners can evaluate, prescribe medications, and follow up with physicians regarding each student’s care.

Through their creativity, the respiratory therapists developed interactive, fun classroom sessions to encourage learning. Popular activities include an online asthma education game and an exercise where children build asthmatic airways using tubing, rubber bands, cotton, wax paper and home-made, artificial mucus to illustrate what happens to their airways during an asthma attack. In another exercise, children make a collage with pictures of the triggers that make asthma worse. In addition to fun activities, Asthma School includes practical, hands-on experience in which the children learn how to use a peak flow meter and apply different types of inhalers to treat their disease. A party at the end of each asthma school is the final touch to the learning experience.

The success of Aurora’s Asthma School also relies on teachers and administrative staff understanding the disease and its effects on children. To ensure they do, the Aurora St. Luke’s therapists use the American Lung Association’s Asthma 101 class as a teaching tool for educators.

In its first three years, Aurora’s Asthma School has successfully helped children understand and control their disease. The program is now addressing the challenge of asthma education for parents, with emphasis on strengthening their engagement, overcoming barriers in dealing with the child’s asthma, and the importance of maintaining a smoke-free home environment.
The Family Care Center at the Aurora Sinai Outpatient Health Center was established in 1995 to provide primary care to families in the surrounding community. It is the urban training site of the Aurora St. Luke’s Family Medicine Residency Program.

Each year the faculty physicians of the Aurora UW Medical Group and their resident physicians treat approximately 5,750 patients at the Family Care Center. The physicians also conduct home visits to established patients whose mental or physical disabilities prevent them from coming to the Center.

Under the direction of the medical director, Dr. Aamir Siddiqi, the physicians and staff have developed a close collaboration with Wisconsin Community Services, a nonprofit agency that works to maximize and maintain the independence of individuals living in the community with mental illness. The staffs of the Family Care Center and Wisconsin Community Services collaborate closely to provide comprehensive care management.

In 2006, Family Care Center physicians were invited to provide in-service training to the Wisconsin Community Services case managers on various health topics. Education topics included diabetes treatment and long-term management, sexually transmitted diseases, emphysema, tuberculosis and Advance Directives.

The resident physicians also provide health checks to teens at the Walker’s Point Youth Shelter on Milwaukee’s south side, usually seeing an average of six teens each week. They come to the shelter for a variety of reasons—homelessness or interpersonal relationship troubles at home and school.

Recently, faculty physician Dr. Elizabeth Bade, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine, received the Wisconsin Community Services annual recognition award as the “Friend of the Friendless” for her outstanding work with the agency’s clients.

Additionally, Dr. Bade has taken over as the driving force behind the Health Careers Club for Milwaukee-area high-school students. In 2006, the Family Care Center partnered with Milwaukee’s Community High School to expose at-risk young adults to the many options and opportunities that help them obtain meaningful and gainful employment within the health care field. Dr. Bade and her staff gave lectures at the school, arranged hands-on experiences within the hospital and clinic, and provided education on relevant topics that the students requested, such as nutrition, diabetes management, STDs and AIDS, contraception, CPR training, etc.
Reach Out and Read is a national program supported by the Family Care Center to make books part of a healthy childhood. Each year, physicians and staff conduct book drives to stock the special reading area within the Center’s waiting room. The Next Door Foundation also donates books to constantly refresh the supply. Children read the books while visiting the clinic and are free to take their favorite books home. Brand new books published by Scholastic are purchased through special funds supported by Aurora’s philanthropy department and awarded to kids who come in for physicals. On National Reach Out and Read Day, children who come to the clinic, as well as students brought in from area daycare centers and schools, are treated to special readings by the Aurora doctors, staff and local public officials.
Aurora West Allis Memorial Hospital, West Allis

_Baby Safety Shower_

The Baby Safety Shower hosted each year by Aurora West Allis Memorial Hospital is a community event planned and presented by students in the School Age Parent Program of the West Allis/West Milwaukee School District.

The Baby Safety Shower is an invaluable learning experience for the young women enrolled in the School-Age Parent Program who are having babies or are new moms. The goal of the program is for them to continue their education and graduate from high school.

In addition to teaching the School Age Parent Prenatal classes, which include information on preparation for labor and birth, care of the newborn, and infant massage, Cynthia Finger has worked closely with the school district, the West Allis Health Department, other community agencies and the students themselves to coordinate the annual Baby Safety Shower for the past nine years. She is the childbirth education services coordinator for the Aurora Women’s Pavilion at West Allis Memorial Hospital and facilitates the students’ work in presenting the Baby Safety Shower.

The students are responsible for researching topics related to child and maternal health, such as the effects of smoking, drugs, alcohol and diet pre- and post-pregnancy, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, to name a few. The students are responsible for displaying and presenting the information to the public. The hospital provides the space, the display boards, the educational, creative services and event-planning support. Working with Cynthia, students coordinate the involvement of important community agencies, such as the West Allis Fire Department and Safe Kids Coalition, in the event. They’re also responsible for staffing their own information booths.

Each year, more than 100 community members attend the Baby Safety Shower.

In fulfilling all their responsibilities to provide important health and safety information to the community, students in the School-Age Parent Program acquire the knowledge they need to be confident and successful parents, and in the process gain work experience and skills they can use in the future.
The Aurora Women’s Pavilion at West Allis Memorial Hospital hosts a year-long calendar of special educational series to support women and empower them in making healthy choices. Examples of topics include:

- The Ultimate Nutrition Workshop, a community education series exploring functional nutrition and use of vitamins and nutritional supplements
- Mother/Daughter Heart Health, an educational program to share information about preventing heart disease in women
- A six-week education series designed for the health needs of women 45 years of age or older.

In addition, the hospital hosts the annual Reflections of Wellness, a Self-Care Expo for Women featuring health-related exhibits and presentations.
Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls  
Wishes do come true  
By: Mary O’Brien, Black River Memorial Hospital

Four-year-old Joey Fockler of Humbird has had one wish—to ride a bicycle. But for Joey, who at age one was severely injured in a motor vehicle accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down, this wish could have been a hard one to come true. But thanks to the Children’s Miracle Network and staff from Black River Memorial Hospital’s Rehabilitation Services Department, Joey’s wish did come true in October.

Black River Memorial Hospital’s physical therapist assistant Becky Windsor has been treating Joey since he was two-years old. He was in the Birth to 3 Program and now has transitioned into the Early Childhood Program at the Alma Center, Humbird and Merrillan School District. During the school year Joey receives therapy twice a week with the hospital’s contracted physical therapist Nancy Reithel and Becky Windsor, PTA. During the summer he is an outpatient at the hospital.

Windsor says that Joey has such a wonderful attitude and “we knew about his wish to ride a bike.” So she and Reithel did some research on hand-driven bicycles and found, through spinlife.com, that a bicycle could be specially made for Joey by modifying a wheelchair. Joey’s family completed a grant application to Children’s Miracle Network for the $1,200 cost of the specially made bicycle and the grant was awarded.

Joey’s father, Ben, shared the good news with him but they did not know when the bicycle would arrive. Windsor says the bicycle was delivered to the hospital and assembled by the maintenance staff. On the day Joey came for an appointment, the Rehab staff had decorated it with balloons and crepe paper and placed it in the hallway so it would be immediately visible when Joey got off the elevator. “He saw it right away,” says Windsor, “and was so happy and giggly with enthusiasm!”

Windsor adjusted the bike to fit Joey and she taught him how to use the hand drives for propelling and braking. “Joey learned quickly how to move and stop the bike and how to get on the bike from his wheelchair,” says Windsor. “Now he is bicycling 3½ miles a day!”

With adjustments, it is predicted that Joey will be able to use this bicycle until he’s in 5th grade. For now, Windsor says the bike is improving his upper body strength, his mobility and his overall independence. “We have seen some good improvements,” she says. “It’s helping Joey both physically and emotionally, and that is so great to see.”

Joey knows now that if you wish hard enough for something, it just might come true. It did for him, and who knows what may happen with his future wishes.
Boscobel Area Health Care, Boscobel

*Wellness Walk results in a different kind of flood*

Saunders Creek, which runs through the center of Boscobel, was notorious for overflowing its banks in the spring. But now, thanks to a flood mitigation project, area residents can enjoy a walking path instead.

Boscobel Area Health Care (BAHC) christened the new paved sidewalk that runs along the creek bed with their first annual “Wellness Walk” this August. The event was flooded with more than 200 walkers. “It was great to see so many people from the community participating – all ages, including the little ones in strollers, families and seniors,” said Gary Bezucha, BAHC Administrator.

The 2.5-mile walk featured six wellness stops, all designed to teach safe habits and reinforce the importance of regular exercise. The bicycle safety stop was especially popular with kids. Other stops highlighted proper hydration, the correct way to monitor pulse rate, the benefits of exercise to cardiac health, good nutrition and stress reduction. Blood pressure checks were also offered at the registration station.

“The Wellness Walk was a huge success,” reports James Schneider, BAHC Community Relations Coordinator. “It was a fun day and we hope that community members will use this event to kick-start an ongoing walking program.”

After completing the route, each walker received a pedometer and water bottle, compliments of BAHC and other sponsors. The effort was a collaboration of the BAHC, Boscobel Clinic, Bluff Street Clinic, Boscobel Counseling Services and Wisconsin Heart with volunteers playing a key role in the event’s success. Coverage of the event was provided by the Boscobel Dial.
Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg  
*Burnett Medical Center donates profits from 5K event*

Burnett Medical Center, located in Grantsburg, WI, organizes and promotes a summertime racing event called The Carlyle Sherstad 5K Walk/Run. They also donate all of the event advertising costs, including flyers, radio and newspaper ads, as well as their Marketing Director’s time spent coordinating this community event.

The 5K race offers local businesses the opportunity to show their support by donating needed items or making cash donations. In return, their business name is printed on the back of all event t-shirts.

This second annual event took place on Saturday, June 2, 2007 and had 167 registrants. Profits totaled $1751.36 and were donated to Faith’s Lodge in Webster, WI—a newly established and unique retreat facility for couples and families dealing with the serious illness or death of a child.

The Carlyle Sherstad 5K was named by a member of the community who entered a naming contest that Burnett Medical Center advertised. Carlyle Sherstad was a great promoter of running in the Grantsburg area for many years. He was also the founder and organizer of a 16.2 mile Grantsburg race, called the “Syttende Mai.”
Columbia St. Mary’s, Inc., Milwaukee

Free screening can detect, treat child development disorders early

When her daughter Noa was 18 months old, Kerry Hansen-Peller wondered why she was so timid at the playground. “She didn’t like being in a swing, and she was afraid to jump off a bottom stair like the other kids did,” Kerry remembers.

“She had finally started to walk – several months after the national average – but she became agitated whenever her feet were off the ground.” Both a physical therapist and Noa’s pediatrician said everything was OK. Still, Kerry had doubts.

One day, she and Noa were at the Sherman Park Family Resource Center, where occupational and physical therapists, and a nurse from Columbia St. Mary’s IMPACT Program were offering free screening of children for developmental problems. The goal of IMPACT – Initial Medical and Pediatric Assessment, Consultation and Training – is finding problems early and providing therapy so children will be prepared and confident when they reach school age.

Kerry signed up for a screening, and almost immediately, pediatric physical therapist Lisa VanderGeeten detected signs that Noa might have a problem: “I asked Noa’s mom if Noa didn’t like walking on grass or sand, or was bothered by movement and motion. Her mom said, ‘That’s Noa to a T.’”

Afterward, Kerry brought Noa to CSM’s pediatric therapy department. Lori Guszkowski, a pediatric occupational therapist, assessed her coordination and told Kerry that Noa had a disorder called sensory integration dysfunction, the inability of the brain to correctly process information perceived by the senses.

“Therapy was key,” Kerry says. “Now, when Noa tries the swing, she’s confident.” Noa also had intensive occupational therapy just before starting preschool. “She’s still behind, but she’s no longer afraid to get involved with the other kids.”
Albert Schweitzer, the medical missionary to Africa, once talked about the challenge in staying motivated because the impact of our work is often difficult to see. He said, “Not one of us knows what effect his life produces, and what he gives to others; that is hidden from us and must remain so, though we are often allowed to see some little fraction of it, so that we may not lose courage.” The story from a parish nurse’s routine health education helps to illustrate Schweitzer’s wisdom:

Once a month at each parish after all the Sunday Masses I offer blood pressure screening and health consultation. Each month I try to have on hand information on a health issue that is timely or relevant. In December I handed out information on grieving during the holidays; in January I made available some articles on New Year’s resolutions. As February is designated American heart month I set out brochures on a variety of topics related to cardiovascular health. I can’t always gauge the impact the information will have but I set it out nonetheless.

Sometimes there is a great deal of interest in the information; at other times very little. This month and at one parish in particular, the cardiovascular information—especially that on women’s heart health—was very popular, and there were only a very few pamphlets left at the end of the day. In March I returned to the parish for their monthly blood pressure screening. A woman approached me. We had never spoken before, but I recognized her as a member of the choir and I remembered that she had been one of those who had picked up some of the heart health information a month ago.

“I want to tell you something,” she said. “Last month I took some of that information you had on women’s health and I ended up with an angioplasty and a stent (placement).”

I looked at her quizzically and invited her to go on. “I had been having chest pain and shortness of breath but was afraid to have a stress test because a friend of mine died after having one,” she continued. She went on to relate that emboldened by the information from the pamphlet she called her physician the next day, made an appointment for the stress test and by the end of the week had undergone a successful cardiovascular procedure. Three weeks later, she stood before me beaming and reported that she was free of chest pain and shortness of breath. “I just wanted you to know,” she said.

Sometimes, I have found that the routine things, the little things, can have a profound impact.
Tyler is a young man who is serious about managing his insulin dependent diabetes. Although he is only an eighth grade student, he has learned a great deal about the challenges of managing a chronic illness. He and his parents monitor his nutrition, adjust his insulin and work with Crystal Hoecherl, the Milwaukee Public School nurse, to improve his health. Despite all of their efforts however, his blood sugar levels were frequently high.

In October, Tyler participated in a School-Based Oral Health Program offered by the Madre Angela Dental Clinic (MADC). After a dentist evaluated his teeth and gums, Tyler received a dental prophylaxis treatment from Pam Prenger, the MADC dental hygienist. Pam found him to be a cooperative and pleasant patient who did have some gum disease and benefited from the treatment.

Pam was pleased to see Tyler in the school corridor about two weeks after the treatment. He approached Pam with a shy smile and said, “I try hard to control my blood sugar, talking to the school nurse, watching what I eat and using insulin regularly; but since you cleaned my teeth, my gums are healthier and my blood sugars are much more under control”.

Health research often describes the complicating interactions between infections and diabetes. Gum infections are often hidden sources of trouble for diabetics. No research could have said it better than Tyler did – oral health is much more than just about teeth and gums. The health and wellness of the whole child depends on good oral health care. A great partnership between Tyler, his family, the MPS nurse and Madre Angela Dental Clinic will continue to work to allow Tyler to be in the best health possible.
When are newspapers bandages?

When a homeless person becomes really desperate, newspapers serve as bandages. Ellen Krueger, RN learned this fact as she provided outreach service for St. Ben’s Clinic at an outreach site in St. James Meal Program in downtown Milwaukee. She was approached there by Harold, a man who had lived on the streets for some time. He was one of the many street people who have a difficult time trusting others, even when in pain. On this day, however, the pain was too much to bear and he asked Ellen for her help with his feet.

As Harold took off his shoes, Ellen saw one reason for his foot pain, no socks. His poor-fitting shoes were rubbing directly on his swollen feet. He had large open sores that he tried to relieve by packing newspapers into the shoes. Needless to say, the newspapers were making his feet dirtier and only making things worse. Ellen’s first action was to cover his wounds with gauze and then to talk to him seriously about coming to St. Ben’s Clinic to have the wounds really cared for.

Harold had developed enough trust in Ellen that he did come to the Clinic. There his feet were soaked, antibiotic ointment was supplied and new socks were given to him. A voucher for shoes was provided by the social worker and Harold was on his way to healing. It did take him several more appointments to have his feet healed completely; but that afforded the time for him to really develop trust in the Clinic and to begin to address his Chronic Lung Disease. Now that he is a part of a health care system, he will no longer need newspapers for bandages.
Marissa and Thomas (not their real names) seemed to be a simple Columbia St. Mary’s Blanket of Love (BOL) success story. They were both regular participants in the BOL prenatal and parenting education program. The program is coordinated by a CSM parish nurse and held in a community church in the central city to provide a setting of hospitality and welcoming to young African American families. The program often struggled to get men involved; but Thomas seemed to look forward to coming. He was always friendly and energetic and the participants appreciated his sense of humor. Marissa and Thomas took advantage of the education and advice given by the women who are BOL staff and mentors. A healthy baby boy was born and they were overjoyed.

They weren’t done with BOL, however. They continued to be regular participants in the parenting education program. It wasn’t easy to go through the challenges of growing along with the new baby, but they dealt with the challenges together. It seemed to be a “Readers Digest” kind of success story. Until one night, Thomas was the victim of the violence that has plagued Milwaukee. He was shot and killed.

The Blanket of Love became something entirely different for Marissa. She had always enjoyed the friendship of the group through the many months of prenatal care and training. But at the time of Thomas’ death, she came to depend on the BOL community for ongoing support. Grieving is a difficult task at any time, but when a baby is involved and a family is ripped apart, it is even harder. Her BOL friends and staff now take the time to be sure that she is adjusting and grieving as well as being a good parent. All are committed to help her be the best parent she can be in keeping with the plans that she and Thomas once held together.
A young man (let’s call him James) who was a student at the Adult Learning Center (ALC) approached Columbia St. Mary’s central city parish nurse, Julia at one of her regular blood pressure screening times. James had his pressure taken and it was fairly good, but as he was leaving, he said, “Oh, by the way, I have had problems when I go to the bathroom recently.” This often happens with blood pressure screenings -- they are valuable as the screenings open the door of communication for people who otherwise would have difficulty in approaching the nurse. James went on to describe symptoms of frequent bowel movements, diarrhea, occasional blood in the stool, and weight loss. He wondered if this was something about which to be concerned.

Julia told him the story of her son, who had some of the same symptoms and was diagnosed with colon disease as a man in his early thirties. James did agree that he should see a physician. An ALC volunteer agreed to take James to her internist to get an initial diagnosis. Julia also arranged for James to get funding for an application for the County General Assistance Medical Plan (GAMP) coverage. The coverage assisted him in getting testing and ongoing care. James was diagnosed with Crohn’s Disease and is now on a medication management program. Without Julia’s care management assistance, it is quite possible that James’ disease could have advanced quickly and led to surgery and a long recovery period.
Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls

Hospital committee offers grants for community health needs

Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls has felt a deep commitment to the community it serves since opening in 1964. That’s why the Board of Directors formed a committee 12 years ago to identify unmet health needs in the community and offer grants to address those needs. That committee, the Community Outreach Steering Committee (COSC), is composed of volunteers representing fire, police, schools, faith-based and non-profit organizations and businesses from communities in Washington County and northern Waukesha County.

During 2006, nine local non-profit organizations received grants totaling $46,500 from the COSC. They include: InHealth Wisconsin — $3,000 to provide teacher in-service sessions on youth depression in the Menomonee Falls, Germantown and Hamilton school districts; Citizen Advocacy of Washington County — $2,500 to expand services with a satellite office in Germantown; Germantown Police Department — $1,000 for bicycle helmets and health and safety information; Greater Menomonee Falls Adult Day Center — $2,100 for the music therapy program; Hope Network, Inc. — $2,500 to publish one issue of Network News for single mothers; Germantown Youth Futures — $710 for youth leadership training and promotional items; Menomonee Falls Teen Center — $2,000 for a room refurbishing project; and Germantown Recreation Department — $851 for the Free Spirit Childhood Library curriculum and Health Healers dog therapy for Kids Klub participants.

In addition, the COSC awarded a grant of $31,839 to the Community Outreach Health Clinic. The clinic, located at Community Memorial Hospital, serves more than 1,800 patients per year who are without health insurance.

The funds are intended to benefit the health of the broader community in support of the hospital’s mission of responding to health needs and enhancing the health status of the surrounding communities.
Cumberland Memorial Hospital, Cumberland
Counselors provide support in wake of tragedy

Last spring, tragedy struck a neighboring community when a fourth grader perished in a bus accident. The Barron County Department of Health & Human Services contacted our North West Regional Center Mental Health Unit to volunteer and we responded. We sent four Psychologists/Counselors to provide support and grief counseling for the families in the wake of the tragedy.
In celebration of Hospital Week, May 6-12, Cumberland Memorial Hospital-Extended Care Unit, Inc. partnered with the Healthier Cumberland Coalition to bring the community a special event called Know Your Numbers, Know We Care. This event took place at the Cumberland Memorial Hospital on May 8th and May 9th from 6-9 a.m. Community members were invited to stop in and have health screenings done free of charge. The screenings included Blood Pressure, Triglycerides, Fasting Glucose, HDL Cholesterol, LDL Cholesterol, Total Cholesterol and Waist Circumference. All of the measurements are related to Metabolic Syndrome, which is a collection of health risks that when combined increase the chances of a person developing heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. When people know their risk, they have “advance notice” and the opportunity to make health and lifestyle changes today that can delay or prevent the development of serious diseases.

One of the goals of the Know Your Numbers, Know We Care event was to help community adults know more about their health numbers and how they can improve their health. Over 175 community members participated over the two days. Health displays, information, prizes, and breakfast refreshments were available for the participants while they waited to discuss their results with a nurse. Because of the caring and commitment they have to the health of their community, Cumberland Memorial Hospital has worked with the Healthier Cumberland Coalition since it began its efforts in 2004.
In the fall of 2003, the Cumberland Memorial Hospital Rehabilitation Department noticed the number of athletes that were coming in with injuries and wanted to address how some of those injuries may be prevented. From that, the Back in Action Sports Clinic was born. The Department of Rehabilitation Services offers FREE sports injury evaluations to athletes of all types. From the “Weekend Warrior” to the competitive collegiate athlete, to the high school novice, our physical and occupational therapists will schedule a 30-minute consultation with anyone to get them back in the game quicker. Typically, the athletes will notice a tight muscle or pain and when they come in. Our therapists will talk about different techniques, stretching, and safety to make sure injuries do not occur. If need be, they will refer the athlete to their doctor if the injury seems to be more than what the athlete originally thought. Typically, our therapists see about 20 athletes per year in the Back in Action Sports Clinic. It’s a huge success amongst our community athletes!
Cumberland Memorial Hospital, Cumberland

*Cumberland Memorial Hospital stresses prevention at the Turtle Lake Inter-County Fair*

Cumberland Memorial Hospital-Extended Care Unit, Inc. recognizes the need for stopping serious health conditions before they happen. Because of our belief in prevention, we set up a health fair at the Turtle Lake Inter-County Fair this past weekend, July 14th and 15th. We were there each day doing FREE preventive tests, including total cholesterol, blood glucose, blood pressure and waist circumference. Nurses shared the results with the patients and explained the risk factors and what they meant towards a person's overall health. They also shared information as to how a patient may improve their numbers. Other displays included bicycle safety, rehabilitation and sun health. Free bottles of sunscreen were given to all attendees as well, helping in the fight against skin cancer. Over 100 adults took part in the free health screenings and many more enjoyed the health fair.
Divine Savior Healthcare, Portage

Personal assistance makes the difference at Divine Savior Healthcare

At Divine Savior Healthcare, we know our patients, their families and our community in general struggle with dozens of questions about the health care system, and many simply don’t know where to start.

While personal assistance has always been the foundation of customer service at Divine Savior, we continue to ramp up efforts to assist patients with and clarify the complex health care delivery system that we know today.

Tested by the Medicare Maze
“Renee” had been struggling to get answers and assistance with her mother’s medical bills for a year and a half.

After raising their children in the Portage area and operating a successful business in Milwaukee, Renee’s parents were able to retire comfortably in Arizona about nine years ago. In 2005, Renee’s father passed away unexpectedly, and her mother, Nancy, cannot live by herself due to health conditions.

“Suddenly we were faced with some big decisions,” Renee relates. “We brought Mom home to Portage for an extended visit to see how things worked out.”

During her visit, Nancy, 81, experienced health complications and spent a night at Divine Savior Healthcare. Because she was technically still an Arizona resident, problems quickly surfaced with Medicare and other insurance coverage. Unfamiliar with the territory, Renee inadvertently signed documents that she thought would benefit her mother’s case. To the contrary, the problems increased 10-fold.

“Medicare, insurance, the many supplemental plans – I was overwhelmed, and I unfortunately made a wrong decision,” Renee says. That’s when Aleatha Bonifas, Concierge at Divine Savior Healthcare, rose to the challenge.

Divine Savior provides community members assistance in a variety of areas, including Medicare, medical bills and confusing insurance plans. In Nancy’s case, Aleatha provided one-on-one education about the different payment options, as well as the various assistance programs available. Through her extensive network with supplemental insurance carriers and Medicare resources, Aleatha helped Renee resolve the billing discrepancies.

“Aleatha went those extra mini miles to help us,” Renee recalls. “She was fantastic.”

Since February, Nancy is an official Wisconsin resident and lives with Renee and family in Portage.

Now more than ever, patients are involved and proactive in selecting their health care services, based on both quality and affordability.

“It’s truly rewarding to go home each day knowing that I’ve helped people in my community. I’m thrilled that we provide that personal touch and go the extra steps every day at Divine Savior.”
Divine Savior Healthcare, Portage
Community health and education every day at Divine Savior Healthcare

Each year, Divine Savior Healthcare offers a variety of programs, classes and health screenings to help educate Portage-area residents about health-related issues and encourage them to be proactive and involved in their wellbeing.

In 2006, over 4,200 community members participated in programs such as babysitting classes, blood pressure measurements, breast-feeding education, cancer education programs and screenings, cholesterol screenings, community health fairs, CPR/first-aid classes, exercise classes, heart disease education, nutrition and weight management programs, and much more.

Health screening turned social scene
On Wednesday afternoons, it may appear that the social hot spot in Portage is in the Community Health & Education suite at Divine Savior Healthcare.

Laughter spills out into the hallway along with tales of grandchildren, gardening and weekend events. The scene reminds us of card parties and ice cream socials with smiles, bright eyes and an occasional photo making its way around the room.

But in place of a party, you’ll find folks waiting their turn for an important health screening – blood pressure measurements.

Community members gather here for the free screening every week, all year long, and over 1,900 people take advantage of the program annually. While the health benefits of blood pressure checks are widely known, the emotional and social benefits of this program are subtler, yet no less real.

The program has become an important network for individuals from a variety of circumstances – from widows and lonely older adults to those suffering financial hardship – who take advantage of this free service, and it represents the core of what we do at Divine Savior Healthcare.


Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

“Living the Mission” group

When the Price County Department of Human Services has to make an emergency placement, whether for a family or an individual, many times the persons being placed have no supplies at all. A group of Flambeau Hospital employees, who call themselves the “Living the Mission” group, prepare emergency placement kits containing assorted daily living products, along with a fleece blanket for the children.

“Please accept our deep and sincere thanks and appreciation for the numerous acts of kindness and charity expressed by your organization in 2006. It is always amazing to us that so many are willing to share so much with those who often have so little,” said Mary Hahn, director of the Price County Department of Human Services. “Each year our staff is restored, renewed, and energized by witnessing the generosity demonstrated throughout our community. On behalf of our board, our staff, and the citizens we serve, our heartfelt thanks!”

The “Living the Mission” group works on numerous projects to benefit others. Examples include a “Mitten Tree Project” at Christmas, which assists in the purchase of toys, clothing, and household items for needy families. Employees participated in the project by making polar fleece blankets to help comfort the children going into emergency care. Another favorite project is “Project May Basket.” One hundred May baskets are assembled – and with the tremendous help of volunteer drivers – are delivered to homebound elderly in the community.

“The kind and selfless efforts of a group like this strengthen the bonds of partnership between the employees and the hospital, as well as the community,” said Jim Braun, CFO, Flambeau Hospital. “We’ve living our mission within the community in order to help the underserved and vulnerable populations, giving people a glimmer of hope in a time of hardship.”
A free program called “Family Food and Fitness Fun” was offered at local schools to encourage healthy lifestyles for families. Sponsored by Marshfield Clinic’s Healthy Lifestyles program in partnership with Flambeau Hospital and the Price County Nutrition Coalition and Physical Activity Group, these programs highlighted fun ways to lead more active, healthier lifestyles. The evening events were held:

- Monday, September 11th at 6:30 p.m. at the Glidden School
- Monday, September 18th at 6:30 p.m. at the Park Falls Elementary School
- Thursday, September 28th at 6 p.m. at the Prentice Elementary School
- Monday, October 2nd at 6:30 p.m. at the Phillips Elementary School.

“Our families, especially our children, need to learn healthy activities and healthy lifestyles to prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic diseases,” said Linda Daubner, Registered Dietitian, Flambeau Hospital. “These evening programs were designed to help busy parents create supportive food and activity environments for their kids. We provided free, supervised children’s activities as well as informational presentations about easy, positive steps for leading a healthy lifestyle.”

Presentations included:
- Healthy snack ideas
- Fast and healthy meals on the go
- Move it or lose it – helping kids to get and stay active
- Breakfast on the run
- Mom was right about eating those fruits and vegetables; Fun ways to keep them interesting
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! Preventing and/or treating weight problems in youth

“The programs were fun, supervised children’s activities were provided, and it was free,” Daubner stated.
Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

*Fort Memorial Hospital teams up with Opportunities, Inc.*

With the new 96,000 sq. ft. addition completed in December, ‘05 and departments being moved to newer and bigger areas, Fort Memorial Hospital saw a need for some additional assistance and Opportunities, Inc. stepped up to fill that need. Opportunities, Inc. was founded by a group of parents who wanted their developmentally disabled children to have a job after graduation. About a year and a half ago, Amy Christian, Customer Service Representative from Opportunities Inc., attended a monthly meeting of all hospital managers to explain how Opportunities, Inc. provides services to address employment needs of area businesses. Fort HealthCare’s Environmental Services Manager approached Christian after the meeting to explore the potential for a collaborative relationship between the organizations.

He recognized that because of the creation of new, larger patient care units, patient service associates (PSA’s) who deliver food and otherwise help to meet routine patient needs, would have increased space to cover. Opportunities, Inc. appeared to be able to help meet that need.

Having mentally and physically challenged individuals from Opportunities, Inc. gain work experience and test their abilities at Fort Memorial Hospital began on Dec. 12 in Obstetrics (OB) and on Dec. 13 in Medical/Surgical/Pediatrics (MSP). The workers help maintain supplies on the units and stock nurse-servers outside each patient room.

Since Opportunities, Inc. and Fort Memorial Hospital teamed up, the result has been positive. The response from the PSAs and nursing staff has been very positive. Pam Kuehl, RN, Manager of MSP, loves the program. “The staff from Opportunities, Inc. is so nice. They are providing a wonderful service. They help the nurses provide care to the patients by having clean linens right outside the door for nurses to use. This is a wonderful relationship between Fort Hospital and Opportunities.”

Every new worker has a six-week employment experience to “try out” the job and for Fort Memorial Hospital managers to observe the person’s skills. Job placements are funded through the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), an agency charged with assisting persons with disabilities succeed in the work force. The DVR contracts through agencies like Opportunities, Inc. to provide direct services.

For over 40 years, Opportunities Inc. has provided program and employment in the community and currently serves over 2,000 persons on an annual basis with disabilities and barriers to employment. Their mission is to provide services to individuals to maximize their success and enhance their abilities to be independent, contributing members of the community. Nearly 80 percent of their work placements are in various community settings like Fort Memorial Hospital.
The three-year partnership between Froedtert and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s (UWM) College of Health Sciences brought learning alive for Wendy Yang. A summer internship at Froedtert through the UWM Minority Internship program led to a part-time position as a medical assistant in the cardiology clinic for the UWM senior. Now she’s considering going on to medical school.

“The information and I read and study about in my books just clicks for me when I’m working in the clinic,” Wendy said. “Simply being in the presence of so many people who were once in my position has pushed me to be more passionate about my studies.”

As a medical assistant, Wendy is often the first point of contact for patients who visit the clinic. Before they see the doctor, she takes their blood pressure, checks other vital signs and reviews their medications with them. Working alongside Medical College cardiologists as well as Froedtert nurses and nurse practitioners, Wendy benefits from a variety of mentors who have different but intersecting roles in caring for a patient.

“Ultimately, it’s all about teaming up for the good of the patient, and my internship allowed me to see how everything comes together,” she said.

A kinesiology major at UWM, Wendy is balancing 12 credits and her medical assistant job until she graduates in Spring 2009 with a bachelor’s of science degree. Then she’ll use her experience at Froedtert to help guide her toward the future.
Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

*Free prostate cancer screenings worth the wait*

Of the 405 men screened for prostate cancer at a free event in May 2007 at Miller Park, nearly 15% had an abnormal PSA (prostate specific antigen) score and about 10% had an abnormal physical prostate exam. The one-day event was sponsored by Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin, FOX 6, the Milwaukee Brewers, and the National Prostate Cancer Coalition (NPCC), to emphasize the importance of early detection in surviving prostate cancer.

The participants received their test results in the mail several weeks after the screening. The NPCC conducts an extensive follow-up process with everyone whose test results are abnormal to ensure they seek care.

“We're extremely pleased that so many men showed up for the event because early detection is the key to curing prostate cancer,” said William See, MD, a prostate cancer specialist practicing at Froedtert Hospital and chairman of urologic surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin. “Many of the men we saw that day said they had never had a prostate exam before. These are exactly the people we want to reach.”

The average age of the screening participants was 58. According to Dr. See, the risk of prostate cancer increases after age 50 for men in general, and for African-American men, the risk goes up after age 40.

The men received two tests: a blood test to measure the amount of PSA in the blood and a physical examination of the prostate gland. The screenings were conducted in 39-foot clinic vehicle operated by the National Prostate Cancer Coalition. Equipped just as a doctor’s office would be, the vehicle is custom-designed to provide health care to men in a comfortable, private environment. Screenings were free and confidential, performed by Medical College of Wisconsin physicians and other clinical experts from Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin.

The novelty of the baseball park venue, the Milwaukee Brewers' strong performance this year and the lure of free Brewers’ tickets to each participant drew an unexpectedly large crowd. Many men waited in line for several hours but there were few complaints.

“Everyone seemed to be in good spirits despite the long wait,” said See. “Some of the guys said there was some real male bonding going on out there.”
Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

Froedtert Hospital provides full-time school nurse for students at Westside Academy

Each day at Westside Academy, students have aches and pains. One day, Andrea, 13, had a stomachache. Another day, Shaquille, 13, had a headache. Their discomfort distracted them from their schoolwork. Fortunately, each was able to see the school nurse for care. But that wasn’t always the case.

Since 2006, Froedtert Hospital has provided a nurse to serve Westside Academy as part of a community health partnership in a low-income, underserved neighborhood. Westside Academy, an independent charter school, is part of the Milwaukee Public Schools system.

In the past, when a student got a rash, toothache, stomachache or headache at school, he or she would often be sent home — when possible. If the school could not contact a parent, office personnel were placed in difficult situations, they were unable to dispense medicine to the students, but still had to make decisions, even for routine needs, due to basic concern for a child’s well-being. Uncertainty could linger about the wait to obtain permission from a parent, or to arrange timely access to a healthcare provider.

Such dilemmas, once common at Westside Academy, have gradually become less frequent. The school nurse offers student nursing care and case management during the school year and summer, with duties inclusive of coordinating services with parents and staff, to meet basic health needs for students. Classroom health education and wellness sessions facilitated by the nurse promote preventive health and early intervention. The school nurse also serves as liaison to the nearby Westside Healthcare Association, a community health center, to provide referrals and assist students and families in need of a primary health care home.

Froedtert covers the salary and associated costs for the full-time nurse to serve the combined student population of 660 children at two locations: Westside Academy I at 1945 N. 31st St., for Head Start through Grade 3, and Westside Academy II at 1940 N. 36th St., for Grades 4-8.

“When I had my headache, my teacher told me I could go see the school nurse,” Shaquille said. “We had brought my medicine here, so it was better than calling home if you have an emergency. It can take a while to get to see a doctor when you have to go to a clinic somewhere.” Shaquille said he was comforted both by the relief he received from treatment of his headache, and the caring manner of the nurse.

With appropriate professional background and credentials, the nurse is able to explain health matters, clarify options and determine intervention needs, as well as seek, obtain and document permission from parents to dispense medication for children in need.

Preliminary outcomes show the availability of the nurse is highly likely to prevent major disruptions in student attendance, and it also provides psychosocial support for students.

During a four-month period in 2006, the Westside school nurse had the highest return-to-class rate — 89 percent compared to the average of 85 percent — for all other school nurses. This measure of how many students were able to remain at school versus being sent home or elsewhere due to health issues is significant, given the proven link between consistent school attendance and academic achievement.

(continued)
The principal of Westside Academy, James Sonnenberg, clearly recognizes that health issues can interfere with how well children perform in school. “A lot of barriers exist for children and families, but basic needs — access to food, housing, clothing and health care — should be met,” he said.

The collaborative relationship between Froedtert and Westside Academy demonstrates how resources promote mutual benefit. “We get a wonderful, full-time resource person who is available to work with students, and to assist their parents who often don’t know what to do about certain medical concerns,” Sonnenberg said. “This is especially helpful when you consider that just taking care of the basic health needs for children will help lead to improved academic achievement. This is our school’s first partnership with a major healthcare institution, and Froedtert is a good corporate partner.”
Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

*Long-term business partnership between Froedtert Hospital and Goodwill Industries creates opportunity for many with disabilities and mental health challenges*

Mental illness is the second leading cause of disability (next to arthritis) in America, resulting in a $100 billion cost to the economy based on lost productivity, according to national statistics from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Stereotypes persist about mental health issues. Due to stigma, the lives of many are diminished and options often limited for people with disabilities, which can prevent them from becoming productive citizens.

For the last 17 years, Froedtert Hospital has contracted with the local Goodwill commercial laundry services facility to provide opportunity and meaningful jobs, with a current volume of business that contributes to 40 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin, Inc. is well known for its retail store and donation centers and human service programs to benefit people with physical, mental and developmental disabilities.

In 2006, Goodwill client-employees sorted, cleaned and processed 4 million pounds of laundry for Froedtert, which would have taken a person 18 years of non-stop washing with their home machine to accomplish, said Gary Goll, director of Linen Services at the Goodwill corporate office, 6055 N. 91st in Milwaukee.

Both Scottie Thigpen, 42, and Wendy Mollenhauer, 61, have worked with Goodwill laundry services more than a year, resulting in a sense of stability and renewal through life-affirming support and the privilege of work.

Thigpen was addicted to alcohol and drugs, but now has more than 18 months of sobriety, his own apartment, a vehicle and a checking and savings account for the first time in his life. “Goodwill was willing to give me the opportunity to work and get ongoing support for my recovery,” Thigpen said.

Mollenhauer, a long-time homemaker who was divorced in 1996 after a 30-year marriage, experienced major depression and felt helpless due to limited external work experience. She has been able to manage stress better due to the extra employee assistance offered to Goodwill clients. “I continue to work on managing my depression, and the supervisors help us in many ways,” Mollenhauer said.

In 2006, Froedert Hospital received a Goodwill Power Partner Award, which is given to companies that advance the mission of Goodwill by providing substantial opportunities for individuals with disabilities or other major barriers to employment. “We’ve had the opportunity to consider other vendors, but felt it was important to support employment in our local community,” said Johnny Guyton, director of Environmental Services at Froedtert. “Our partnership with Goodwill is a win-win situation.” The Froedtert and Goodwill collaboration is also helping to change perceptions. “We’re promoting health and quality of life through real work and jobs for those with disabilities and barriers, with positive outcomes,” Goll said.
Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

Abrazar La Vida (Embrace Life) Hispanic Women’s Support Group

When confronted with barriers—whether income, language or cultural differences—people often feel vulnerable placing their well-being in the care of doctors and other health care professionals. Given the potential for miscommunication, women diagnosed with breast cancer, like Dora Maldonado, Elena Araujo and Ada Santiago, know what it’s like to be at such a disadvantage. They’ve been scared, frustrated and stressed at times due to being without a point of reference when making major medical decisions for themselves. They’ve faced various challenges in navigating health care systems, and seeking financial and other resources to assist their healing and recovery.

Maria Rosario Gonzalez recalled how, after a surgery that didn’t go well, she became sensitive to touch. When she saw a doctor for follow-up, he implied she was imagining her pain and discomfort. Gonzalez, Maldonado, Araujo and Santiago each said they have had misunderstandings with providers when they expressed worries about the potential risks and side effects from certain medications to treat breast cancer.

As part of the Breast Cancer/Breast Health support group, Abrazar La Vida, for low-income, Hispanic women, the women get to communicate with others who share their experience, in the primary or only language that most of them speak: Spanish. The participants range in age from 42 to 61. One has been in America since 1972. Another is relatively new to the country.

The group, whose name translates to “Embrace Life,” evolved from collaboration between Froedtert Hospital and Westside Healthcare Association, a federally-qualified community health center, in response to gaps in community health resources to meet the needs of underserved populations. The group receives in-kind support from Froedtert for basic resources, and staffing by Amy Sanchez, a social worker who is bilingual and became the group’s part-time coordinator in September 2005. The group first obtained a grant in Spring 2005 from the Milwaukee Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Foundation, with subsequent funding now through March 2008. Members of the group have access to the educational and medical expertise of Froedtert and Medical College of Wisconsin physicians and nurses, and the involvement of Froedtert staff in volunteer capacities through mentoring, health education and outreach activities in their community. Although relatively small now with six women, the group is open to expanding if a need exists, according to Sanchez.

Abrazar La Vida meets the third Thursday of each month, and provides relevant emotional, psychosocial and resource support to breast cancer patients and their families. As part of the group, the women said they appreciate being able to share both the hard and hopeful times, how they coped with barriers, managed personal and family obligations, handled moments of despair and overcame fears. They exchange information, and provide support to assist and comfort each other along the way.

A few of the women previously participated in other support groups for women with breast cancer, but have found they feel more ease and fewer restraints in an environment that embraces their native language. “We recognized that it would be more beneficial to have a group in Spanish versus having an interpreter come in, because it’s a delicate situation for these women, and so much can get lost in translation,” Sanchez said. “The group makes a difference in their lives because it’s not all about breast cancer. There are cultural issues that come into play. These women have families, and people respond to their illness in different ways, so they want to discuss many things. They are becoming educated by sharing information. They’re learning to become their own health care advocate.”
Froedtert Hospital partners with Westside Healthcare Association to enhance care to underserved area

A diagnosis of high blood pressure in recent years requires George Wiggins, 72, to take daily medication. For the last six years, Wiggins has been a patient of the Westside Healthcare Association, where he is being closely monitored by his primary care physician.

Wiggins is one of about 70,000 people who live in the Westside Healthcare Association service area, composed of mostly racial and ethnic minorities in Milwaukee's north and west sides. The majority of the area's households are low-income. Many residents are uninsured or underinsured for health care and impacted by significant health disparities.

“I see my physician at Westside about three or four times a year, or anytime I feel bad,” Wiggins said. “He’s very concerned about me and takes the time to listen and answer my questions.”

Westside’s service area consists of 36 census tracts, with 33 considered medically underserved areas, and 13 designated by the federal government as primary care health professional shortage areas.

As part of a major partnership over the last several years, Froedtert Hospital has worked with Westside Healthcare Association, a Federally Qualified Health Center, to increase its capacity to serve patients. During this partnership, Froedtert has provided substantial cash contributions and in-kind administrative, marketing and staff training support to help WHA enhance community health services and improve access for underserved populations.

Jenni Sevenich, chief executive officer of Westside Healthcare Association, reports that many benefits have resulted from the Westside Healthcare Association strategic linkage with Froedtert.

“The relationship we have with Froedtert helps our bottom line as a community health center, from both the in-kind and outright contributions they make,” Sevenich said. “Our community suffers from major health disparities. In order to address these, our health center needs access to services we can’t provide, such as medical specialists and expanded health education programs.

In 2006, Westside Healthcare Association provided primary health care and dental services to nearly 7,000 patients. A combined staff of 35 full-time equivalent employees works at the two WHA clinics in the central city — the Lisbon Avenue Health Center at 3522 W. Lisbon Ave. and the Hillside Family Health Center at 1452 N. 7th St.

In October 2006, Westside Healthcare Association received approval for an affiliation agreement with Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin from the federal Bureau of Primary Health Care. The Bureau assists states and local communities in providing health care to medically underserved populations through health centers.

“I’ve always felt that partnerships are essential,” Sevenich said. “Collaboration is key in this environment of limited resources to bring the best care possible to the community.”
Here’s a wonderful letter we received from a grateful patient.

I am writing to express my deepest appreciation to Froedtert Hospital, the Eye Institute, the doctors and all the others that were involved in this amazing decision and act of kindness. I want to thank you for the financial assistance that was applied to my circumstance. There are no words to describe what your health care institute has done for me and for others. It has strengthened the vision of generosity, compassion and kindness that I have seen in each individual at Froedtert, the Eye Institute and in the community.

I don’t know the extent of individuals and help provided in this charity assistance, but I hope this will reach all involved, and may God bless this institution and all the individuals concerned a thousand-fold. I hope this institution prospers in all aspects and is recognized and honored for what you have done for me and the community.

I had written to Froedtert and told them I was severely visually impaired and glasses were not correcting my vision. I was not eligible for Title 19 or GAMP because of my income; I could not afford insurance. Through your generosity and compassion, you waved the fee for my procedures, which amounted to over $40,000. How can you express gratitude for that type of generosity? You decision has not only enriched my life once again, but those around me. I am no longer a burden to others and want to thank you for the gift of sight.

The Bible states that God has placed all authorities in their positions. Knowing this, I can see the special people he has placed there. Their qualities are too numerous to list each one; a few of the gifts they have are compassion, generosity, fairness and all decisions and skills that together make the quality institution you are.

I am blessed beyond measure and pray this organization is rewarded continually for what you do for each individual that has the privilege of being treated by your institution. You have provided this community with outstanding spiritual encouragement, financial assistance, and quality care for each individual.

Again, there are no words to express my deepest appreciation for the services provided, including surgery, doctor appointments, scheduling, and financial assistance. I hope this community appreciates all you have done and the high standards you maintain throughout your organization to provide the best care possible for each of us.

God bless you for what you have done and may prosperity reach your paths continually. Please forward this to all the proper individuals who were involved in the restoration of my eyesight.

Thank you again.

Colleen Noonan
Employees of Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill spent the past few weeks collecting items to make the holidays a little brighter for those who need it most in the Merrill Community.

In an annual effort organized by the Hospital’s missions committee, employees joined together to gather 40 complete meals that were donated Thursday to the Merrill Food Pantry.

“It’s great to get this level of support from the Hospital employees,” said Dale and Jackie Kuck, co-directors of the Merrill Food Pantry. “We rely heavily on these efforts as well as donations to purchase about $60,000 worth of items each year for families that really need it.”

The event was a true team effort as department employees collected items to complete a “kit” to donate to the Food Pantry while department directors, managers, supervisors and the Good Samaritan Foundation donated funds for a turkey or ham to complete the meal.

“This was a project that was easy to support,” said Michelle Odegard, physical therapist assistant and member of the missions committee. “Once the ball got rolling in each department, it was exciting to see people joining together in this effort.”

The Merrill Food Pantry relies on support from the employees of Good Samaritan as well as other members of the business community and area church’s to support nearly 3,000 people from throughout Lincoln County.

“We are proud to be doing our part to help Merrill residents who need it this holiday season,” said Michael hammer, president and chief operating officer. “It was amazing to see the collection grow and grow over the past few weeks with donations from every department in the Hospital.”
Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill
Rehabilitation Services bands together to provide quality patient care and community support

Therapists and staff in Rehabilitation Services at Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill spend much of their time providing one-to-one patient-focused care to people from all walks of life.

This effort usually involves an individualized focus, but every year this group of health professionals goes a step further to band together for the benefit of the Merrill community.

The Rehabilitation Services Department is putting the finishing touches on its annual service project, this year featuring a cookbook sale to benefit the Merrill Food Pantry.

This group of physical, occupational, industrial and cardiac rehabilitation professionals uses National Rehabilitation month to jump-start a project to benefit the community. This year’s project resulted in the sale of nearly 300 cookbooks and generated $1200 for the Food Pantry.

“This project was especially fun because a number of us love to cook,” said Kathy Anderson, physical therapist assistant and cookbook project leader. “To be able to share a treasure of great recipes and have the end result provide much needed support to the food pantry is rewarding for all of us.”

The development of the cookbook also spurred an additional fund raising source as Rehabilitation Services staff assembled “recipe kits” from the pages of “Celebrate Rehab Services” that were put up for bid in the Hospital Cafeteria. Anderson was quick to also give credit to her cookbook committee of Michelle Odegard, Kristen Woller, Deb Zuelsdorff and Lana Seefeldt for their efforts to make the project a success.

“This kind of effort is the lifeblood of the Merrill Food Pantry,” said Dale and Jackie Kuck, co-directors of the food pantry. “We are able to support about 3,000 people in Lincoln County each year and if we didn’t have this type of support we would not be able to do it.”

The Merrill Food Pantry uses CAP services as its screening agency. Families in need receive a form from the agency that they bring to the food pantry to receive items based on the size of their families.
Grant Regional Health Center, Lancaster

Grant Regional Health Center hosts teen health & wellness seminar

Grant Regional Health Center hosted a Teen Health & Wellness Seminar on Saturday, June 23rd from 10 a.m. – Noon. A hospital employee with young children brought this idea forward to Administration to see how this could be made possible. A committee was formed that included a nurse, dietitian, transcriptionist, massage therapist, and marketing coordinator.

The free seminar was designed to provide girls, currently in grades 5-8, with information about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. The committee members felt at this impressionable age they could make a big impact on young lives. Lancaster is a small, rural community that unfortunately doesn’t offer wellness programs for girls in this age category. The committee saw an unmet need in the community and thought they could do a pilot project for just Lancaster in hopes that it would be successful and would be able to offer future programs for other schools/communities. Flyers were distributed through the middle school health education classes and also mailed to parents with girls in those specific grades. A news release and radio spots were also used to promote the seminar.

The power-packed two-hour program offered four 30-minute breakout sessions including:

1. Positive Image & Attitude – presented by Gina Trollop of WKM Psychology
2. Healthy Diet & Exercise – presented by Tracy Ackerman, Registered Dietitian at Grant Regional Health Center
3. Physical Appearance & Maturing – presented by Kelly Muench, Physician Assistant at Grant Community Clinic
4. Skin Care & Make-Up Tips – Holly Oyen, Cosmetologist/Skin Care Consultant, Hair Rage

Each participant received a complimentary Wellness Kit and delicious, healthy snacks. All presenters and other local businesses donated items for the kit including: a tote bag from Grant Regional, wellness journal and other giveaways from Dean/St. Mary’s clinics, bottled water, granola bars, lotions, make-up remover wipes, hand sanitizer, drug safety booklet, jewelry, photo frames, and magnets. To make it more enjoyable and comfortable for girls that age, the committee decorated using a Hawaiian theme and served fruit smoothies. Even with only 17 girls attending, the committee felt it was a good turnout for a small community. The comments we received from the girls and family members after the seminar were very positive. It was a great idea that hadn’t been done before and it’s something that the hospital committee will definitely try to coordinate again in the future.
Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, La Crosse

Innovative program challenged people to spend Minutes in Motion

To get people in the community moving, La Crosse-based Gundersen Lutheran Health System, in collaboration with supporting community partners, created Minutes in Motion. This was an exciting community-wide, six-week activity challenge designed to get people of all ages engaged in more physical activities. Participants of all ages were encouraged to challenge themselves to move at least 30 minutes every day for six weeks. More than 3,500 Gundersen Lutheran employees and community members participated in Minutes in Motion, including 400 teams from area businesses. 5 million minutes of activity were reported by the end of the 6 weeks!

The Minutes in Motion challenge was a fun, innovative way to promote regular physical activity. Physical activity is one of the best and easiest ways for people to improve health, morale and productivity, as well as lower healthcare costs for patients and the organization.

As incentive to get people excited about Minutes in Motion, Gundersen Lutheran gave free pedometers to the first 1000 community members and first 600 employees that signed up. All participants received weekly wellness tips by e-mail and a free copy of Prevention Connection newsletter. Cash and other prizes were awarded at the celebration party, held on May 16, Employee Health and Fitness Day.
Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, La Crosse

500 Club helps people eat healthier

There is no denying Americans are getting fatter. But mention dieting and most people conjure up images of eating nothing but “rabbit food” and seemingly endless hours of exercising. But La Crosse-based Gundersen Lutheran Health System, in partnership with area restaurants and food retailers, is helping consumers find great tasting, accessible healthy eating choices and nutrition education.

The 500 Club is a healthy eating program coordinated by Gundersen Lutheran registered dietitians and recommended by physicians. To qualify for 500 Club status, food selections must be 500 calories or less and have 15 grams of fat or less. The 500 Club logo on menus and food labels takes the guesswork out of making healthier food choices for consumers.

“Choosing the 500 Club helps me keep track of my daily calorie and fat gram goals. I’m glad to find that I can still enjoy my favorite cuisine - Chinese food. The 500 Club choices at the Dragon are excellent,” says Janet Bahr, who regularly looks for the 500 Club logo.

Bev Dinicola, owner of a Wendy’s franchise that’s a 500 Club member, says, “With our 500 Club we didn’t take away the sauces we just use less of the same thing and the response has been excellent.”
Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, La Crosse
*Helping make our environment mercury-free*

Mercury, a potent neurotoxin and developmental toxin, can impact human health at extremely low levels. By eliminating mercury, Gundersen Lutheran is helping to protect vulnerable populations like infants, pregnant mothers and young children from the damaging effects of mercury pollution.

To help reduce mercury in the community, Gundersen Lutheran conducted a mercury thermometer exchange that resulted in the distribution of more than 300 free digital thermometers and public education about the dangers of mercury. Within the organization, Gundersen Lutheran eliminated blood pressure cuffs with mercury, uses only mercury-free wall mounted thermometers, and eliminated lab fixatives containing mercury.

Gundersen Lutheran Health System in La Crosse, Wis., is proud to have earned the Making Medicine Mercury Free Award, a prestigious national award given by Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E). The award is given to facilities that have met the challenge of becoming virtually mercury-free.

“We believe that part of our mission to promote the health of the community is to protect the environment we all share,” says Nick Nichols, environmental coordinator, Environmental Safety & Health, Gundersen Lutheran. “Making our community healthier by replacing mercury devices in our facility with safe and effective alternatives just makes sense, and we are proud to be recognized for our efforts.”
Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, La Crosse

Clearing the air at Gundersen Lutheran

Gundersen Lutheran is committed to protecting the health of patients, visitors and employees. Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death and disease in the United States and quitting tobacco is the best thing people can do to improve their health.

Gundersen Lutheran Health System believes it has a responsibility to provide community leadership for health-related initiatives, so as of Jan. 1, 2007, its La Crosse and Onalaska campuses and many regional facilities and affiliates, went smoke-free. Becoming a smoke-free campus provide a healthier environment for employees, patients and visitors.

To make the transition to a smoke-free environment, employees and patients have easy access to ongoing support. Guidelines, training and refresher courses are available to clinicians to help them help patients quit the use of tobacco products. In addition, Gundersen Lutheran has sponsored free presentations by renowned experts on the latest options for treating tobacco-dependent patients.

Gundersen Lutheran offers Journey to Freedom Nicotine Cessation Clinic and Support Groups. This smoking cessation program has a success rate of more than 50 percent, well above the national average. As part of a multi-prong approach, one-on-one consultations with a tobacco cessation provider, nicotine cessation self-help booklets and quit kits are also available. Gundersen Lutheran employees can also receive vouchers for 80 percent discounts on over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapy and free counseling through the Employee Health Services.
Physical activity is important to everyone, no matter the age or fitness level. Recognizing a need for an exercise program geared toward older and less active adults, Gundersen Lutheran Health System, based in La Crosse, created a moderate intensity exercise program called Swing Into Shape. In a fun, safe environment, the class teaches safe movements for flexibility, muscle strength and endurance. Postural awareness, balance skills and coordination are emphasized through seated, standing and low-impact movements.

Physical therapists, fitness experts and gerontology specialists developed this safe and effective exercise program. Swing into Shape is offered as a class in the community. In addition, the video is provided for local cable access networks so that it can be seen on public television on various days and times. It is also available for purchase on videotape and DVD.
Hayward Area Memorial Hospital, Hayward

Hospital teams up with local school to promote hand washing

Our hospital experienced many calls from parents who had heard reports of children becoming seriously ill or dying from influenza. They were frightened, especially when it began to travel through the schools. Area schools do a great job of trying to prevent infectious diseases from spreading, but the fact is, diseases spread because children act like children. They forget to wash their hands, don’t always cough into their sleeves, and willingly share their eating utensils, snacks and drinks with their friends.

Information from the Hayward Community School’s nurse showed the school does post information and teaches prevention methods. In addition, they used antibacterial wipes to clean classroom surfaces and sanitizing agents are placed in high traffic areas such as the gym. Even doing a good job of cleaning, the nurse saw instances where the symptoms matched influenza and other cases were confirmed through medical testing.

Since it has been documented that frequent hand washing is one of the strongest methods used in the prevention of influenza, the Education and Infection Control staff saw a way to help the schools prevent children from acquiring or spreading influenza and thereby reducing the threat to the entire community.

To do this, the staff knew the teachers needed a quick and easy way to have students cleanse their hands at the moment a cough, sneeze or other bacteria spreading incident occurred. They felt hand sanitizing gels that can kill bacteria even better than antibacterial soap were the answer. They ordered large containers of hand sanitizing gel and delivered 300 of them to Hayward Community School District classrooms and the LCO School classrooms on the reservation.

The Hayward school nurse told the hospital staff the bottles of gel were well received by the teachers. Many of them asked if the donation could be repeated in the fall.

The hospital also incorporates hand washing in their Kid’s Day program. Kid’s Day is an event that brings all first grade classes in Sawyer County to the hospital to experience an activity developed many years ago to introduce children to the hospital setting. A mock hospital room is set up in the Education Department and the health care professionals who teach the sessions show the children what they might experience if they were to become ill or injured and have to be admitted to the hospital. Education on hand washing, the spread of infectious disease and other health safety issues is covered.
Patient helped through Community Care Program – ulcerated leg and counseling for alcohol and drug abuse

“I had a badly ulcerated left leg. I couldn’t work, had no insurance, or any funds. Because of Holy Family Memorial’s Community Care Program, I got the help I needed to save my leg. Prior to my leg problem, Tamarack Behavioral Health Center helped me pay for the counseling sessions so I could get help to quit my alcohol and drug abuse. I’ve been clean and sober for 6 years. Thank you so very much!”

100% full Community Care assistance helps single female with leg surgery and therapy
A 37-year-old single female fractured her ankle. The break required extensive surgery and months of physical therapy. She worked part-time at a job that did not provide health insurance, and there was no liability insurance involved in the incident. She qualified for 100% Community Care assistance to cover medical care related to her ankle injury, which amounted to over $38,000 in services.

Severe depression turns out as brain tumor – 100% Community Care gives new life
A 22-year-old male patient suffered from severe depression, panic attacks and more. He was unable to hold a job and had become homeless. He required ongoing treatment for his mental illnesses and applied for Community Care. He was approved for 100% Community Care and was able to continue with his treatment. During the treatment, they found a brain tumor. He has now applied for Social Security Disability and is awaiting the determination. If Community Care had not assisted this patient and allowed for follow-up care, who knows how long it would have taken before the brain tumor was found?

Holy Family Memorial Community Care gives over $100,000 for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease patient
A 58-year-old, uninsured, male patient with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease was approved for 100% Community Care assistance. Holy Family Memorial provided him with well over $100,000 in services covered under Community Care in 2006 alone. He is currently on Social Security Disability but will not receive Medicare until March of 2007. His Social Security Income is too high for him to be eligible for Medical Assistance.

Daughter assisting disabled father diagnosed with breast cancer – $50,000 worth of treatment covered through Community Care Program
A 45-year-old female patient was diagnosed with breast cancer. Unfortunately, at the time she was diagnosed, she was only receiving income to take care of her elderly disabled father. She did not have health insurance of her own. She applied for Community Care from Holy Family Memorial and received a full discount. Her treatment took over one year and she received well over $50,000 worth of treatment fully covered by Community Care.

Life-sustaining treatment through Community Care keeps woman awaiting liver transplant alive
One patient, a 47-year-old female patient, qualified and received over $100,000 in Community Care in 2006 from Holy Family Memorial because of her numerous health issues. Those issues kept her from maintaining and obtaining employment. Community Care allowed her to receive the life sustaining treatment she requires while she awaits a potential liver transplant. She also awaits her Social Security Disability determination and potential Medical Assistance coverage.
Unemployed man receives care van trips to hospital for antibiotic therapy twice each day through Community Care Program

A 37-year-old, unemployed man with a bone infection required antibiotic therapy twice daily for two months. He had no insurance, however. Holy Family Memorial’s Community Care covered the expenses to have the gentleman transported by the Holy Family Memorial Care Van to our hospital, and received his two months of therapy service twice each day.
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

*Simulated Crash*

What would happen following a crash involving an anhydrous-loaded tanker truck, a school bus and several other vehicles?

That was just the scenario created for the disaster/code yellow drill enacted on Sept. 7. Along with drill-organizer Lakeview Medical Center (LMC), other community participants included the Rice Lake Fire Department; LMC, Birchwood, Cumberland, Barron, and Chetek ambulances; and Barron County Emergency Management.

87 LMC staff members, 20 Rice Lake High School students and 17 second-year nursing and paramedic students from WITC worked to make the drill not only possible, but as realistic as possible.

The crash was simulated at the intersection of Pioneer and South streets at 12:30 p.m. A white gas cloud was reportedly leaking from under the tanker, with wind blowing it toward the WITC and UW-Barron County campuses. Barron County quickly dispatched the LMC Ambulance and Rice Lake Fire Department, and advised the LMC Emergency Desk charge nurse of the potential for a mass casualty situation involving a chemical, and trauma-related injuries. LMC then activated its Incident Command System.

The drill met all Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) standards – such as an influx of patients, community involvement and independent evaluators – for disaster drills. Outside evaluators Judy Jones of Luther Midelfort Mayo Health System’s Emergency Department and Dallas Crowe, Bloomer Medical Center’s safety director, observed the drill and had positive feedback.

According to LMC Ambulance Coordinator Russ Dennis, the drill went very smoothly and was a positive indication of the teamwork that would transpire during a real disaster. He added that everyone involved should be commended on their hard work and added effort to make the drill a successful tool.

A great deal of preparation took place behind the scenes at LMC prior to this drill. Additional education and training led to vast improvement between last year’s and this year’s drill, according to Dennis. Departments such as lab, housekeeping, radiology and emergency took the initiative to hold mini-drills throughout the year, and the focus of much internal communication was on disaster preparedness. The same preparation is planned between now and the next drill, scheduled for spring of 2007.
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

**LMC co-sponsors 50-Plus Challenge to promote healthy lifestyles**

Lakeview Medical Center (LMC), the Barron County Office on Aging, the University of Wisconsin – Barron County and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College teamed up for the 50-Plus Challenge to Live Well, an event to encourage adults age 50 and over to add activity to their lifestyle for health.

Older Americans are more sedentary contributing to a variety of health-related problems as they age. The 50-Plus program was developed to increase awareness of health issues related to an inactive lifestyle and provide people with enjoyable ideas and examples of activities they could easily pursue on their own or with friends.

Held in Rice Lake, the 50-Plus Challenge to Live Well featured free health screenings, information and demonstrations on recreational activities and hobbies, as well as guest speakers. Each participant received a “Passport to Health,” requiring participation in at least 12 activities to qualify for prizes like a free three-month membership in LMC’s Health & Wellness Center.

The free health screenings included blood pressure, body fat, lung function, vision, blood sugar, body mass index and strength tests. Participants could partake in interactive tests to show their level of fitness and were given easy, everyday activities they could do to improve their lifestyle. They were also given information about activities and hobbies that could help sharpen their physical and mental skills.

More than 250 participants, aged 50+, turned out for the event.
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

*Preventing falls and fall-related injuries in the older population*

FACT: Falling is the leading cause of hospital admissions due to injury for those over 65. If you are over 65, you have a 1-in-3 chance of falling this year.

Lakeview Medical Center (LMC), the Barron County Office on Aging, and the Injury Research Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin recently partnered to create and implement a program aimed at preventing falls and fall-related injuries among older adults in Barron County. A secondary aim was to link older adults at risk for falls to existing health services.

Aligned with the state’s health plan to reduce fall-related injuries and deaths, the Barron County Fall Prevention Project involved risk assessments and screenings, education, physical therapy, exercise and home safety assessments and modifications.

While originally designed to be a year-long project, the success has caused elements to be incorporated into the daily operations of Lakeview Medical Center and the Office on Aging.

While it is a fact that falls pose a great threat to seniors, it’s also a fact that doing strengthening exercises can help.

With this in mind, Lakeview Medical Center’s Cardiac Rehabilitation department created its free-of-charge Fall Prevention Exercise Class. This class is designed to help seniors and others at risk for falls due to flexibility and balance issues.

As people age they lose muscle, which may cause loss of flexibility and balance. Fall Prevention Exercise Class is an 8-week program for anyone who wants to improve balance and reduce the risk of falls.

Participants are asked to bring small hand weights or soup cans to aid in the exercises. It is a safe class that allows participants to go at their own pace while working with LMC healthcare professionals — all set to fun, upbeat music. It can not only prevent falls, but relieve stiff joints and body pain, improve sleep, decrease depression, help those with arthritis and osteoporosis, and improve overall health.

Those who take part in the class not only benefit physically, but benefit through meeting new people and making friends, while establishing healthy habits.

LMC also plans to implement assessments to the hospital admission form that identify a patient’s risk for falls.
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

3rd Annual Hang on Thru the Holidays at Lakeview Medical Center

Lakeview Medical Center (LMC) wrapped up its 3rd annual Hang on Thru the Holidays promotion with stunning results once again.

This seven-week program was designed to motivate participants to avoid the extra weight commonly gained during the holidays ... and even lose some pounds. The cost was $5 per person, with all the money collected returned in cash prizes. The individual who lost the most weight won $100. Also, for every pound a participant loses, their name is entered into a drawing for $100 – the more they lost, the more chances to win. Participants were required to weigh in weekly with LMC Cardiac Rehab or Health & Wellness Center staff.

During the 2006 program, 242 participants lost a combined 517 pounds. Eleven participants won $100.
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

LMC Helps People Breathe Well, Live Well

In June of 2007, Lakeview Medical Center (LMC) offered its first Breathe Well, Live Well program for members of its community suffering from asthma.

Breathe Well, Live Well is an American Lung Association education program for adults with asthma. The focus is on reducing illness and disability by improving asthma knowledge and self-management skills. LMC offered the program to help asthmatic adults understand their disease and medications so they can keep themselves healthy through self-management, thereby improving their quality of life.

LMC’s Breathe Well, Live Well program was facilitated by certified facilitator Char Mlejnek, LMC Health Promotions Director. The program was a two-day session, running for two hours each day. It was free of charge to participants, who also received gifts such as peak flow meter and pill trays.

The American Lung Association stipulates that up to 10 participants can be part of the Breathe Well, Live Well program at one time. LMC’s first program had nine participants, all of whom said they learned more during the comprehensive two-days than they had anywhere else since being diagnosed with their disease. LMC plans to continue offering the valuable program on an annual basis.

Breathe Well, Live Well was developed with grant support from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Center for Environmental Health.

More than 22 million Americans have asthma, which caused over 1.8 million emergency room visits in 2004. Asthma accounted for an estimated 14.5 million lost workdays in 2004, and the annual direct health care cost of asthma is approximately $11.5 billion.
Paul O’Donnell is used to brushing aside the minor aches and pains of daily life.

Living on the streets for 1½ years teaches you not to worry about little inconveniences, said the 51-year old Eau Claire man.

But on Oct. 20, O’Donnell experienced back pain he could not ignore. The homeless man went to the Luther Hospital emergency room. After X-rays and a biopsy, he discovered he had lung cancer, which had spread to his liver and ribs.

“It’s been a struggle,” said O’Donnell, who spends most of his days at Positive Avenues, a downtown drop-in center for the homeless and for people with mental illness. “It’s hard to get help sometimes.”

Within a few days of his diagnosis, O’Donnell couldn’t walk. He returned to the ER where a CT scan showed the cancer had spread to his right hipbone.

“The pain, that’s the big thing,” said O’Donnell, who now uses a wheelchair and receives chemotherapy treatments. “I have to pay for the (pain) medications on my own, and sometimes I can’t afford it.”

Help is on the way - hopefully.

Earlier this month a patient financial planner at Luther helped O’Donnell file for presumptive disability insurance. O’Donnell should learn within the next couple of weeks whether his request was accepted and which medical services his plan will cover. Data submitted to Eau Claire County also could qualify him for housing assistance and food stamps.

But waiting for that support to arrive has been difficult, said O’Donnell, who’s still looking for a reliable way to afford his medications.

“It brought me into a depression, somewhat,” he said of his fight with cancer. “But I am dealing with it. I rely on talking to people about what’s going on with me.”

O’Donnell, a 1974 Memorial High School graduate, has been told his cancer is terminal.

His lack of regular medical care and homelessness has been a detriment to O’Donnell’s health, said Dr. Sandeep Basu.

“If this was a person who would have had some kind of regular medical health checkups, there is a possibility that this would have been picked up sooner,” said the oncologist, who diagnosed O’Donnell with small cell lung cancer. “While it is an aggressive cancer, there is at least some chance of controlling it over the long term if we had caught it at an earlier stage.”
Staying healthy during treatment presents a multitude of challenges for O’Donnell, who last had health insurance five years ago.

Without a job or a place of his own, following his doctor’s suggestions of eating nutritious foods and avoiding infections that could attack his immune system - weakened by chemo - could be difficult.

“This whole situation just really upsets me,” said Sue Howe, human services coordinator at Positive Avenues.

She’s glad that O’Donnell may soon receive medical insurance, but is frustrated that his request is expected to take three weeks to process.

“I’d like to find a way to get him more help,” she said. “Maybe there is help and we don’t know about it.”

Howe wishes O’Donnell had a more permanent place to stay. This week he started living with a friend, but after his diagnosis in October he spent his nights sleeping in a van outside.

“I think it’s just a reflection of how we treat each other,” Howe said. “I get angry. I think we treat our streets better than the people who walk them.”

Many of the people who come to Positive Avenues, a Lutheran Social Services organization, have struggled to gain access to proper medical care and housing, Howe said. “I hear - and this is from the homeless - that there are 400 people on the streets,” Howe said. “I think they are mostly invisible to most people.”

O’Donnell agrees. “Years ago, I didn’t even know there were homeless people here, until I became homeless myself and then I started finding out,” said O’Donnell, whose family originally was from Chippewa Falls.

After high school, O’Donnell went to work at his family’s John Deere store in Eau Claire. When the business closed he found work as a janitor. O’Donnell’s struggles with alcoholism got him fired from his last job and left him without a home.

In the last 18 months he’s spent many nights sleeping outside in the downtown area. If it rained, he’d find cover under a bridge.

O’Donnell, who has been sober for more than two weeks, said he’s trying to focus on his health.

Sitting inside the main room at Positive Avenues last week, O’Donnell leaned forward in his wheelchair as he talked about how his cancer diagnosis has showed him the value of friendship. Center clients greet him by name, some patting his back, when he wheels into the Barstow Street building. Many of the regulars have reached out to O’Donnell, offering encouragement and, at times, using their limited incomes to help buy him food and other necessities.

“I keep a real positive attitude,” O’Donnell said, an intensity burning within his blue-gray eyes. “I don’t let it bring me down. I just keep seeing the positive side of it.”

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Luther Midelfort, Eau Claire

*Luther Midelfort offers holiday gifts to the community*

For the fourth year, Luther Midelfort employees have worked together to make the holidays brighter for families and groups in the area.

Departments at Luther Midelfort have purchased gifts and other items for about 50 families. The gifts corresponded with wish lists for children and adults who will receive everything from clothes and toys to household items and food.

Mitten trees were placed at each clinic site to collect hats, mittens and scarves for people of all ages. Hundreds of items were collected in Eau Claire, Barron, Bloomer, Cameron, Chetek, Prairie Farm, Colfax, Chippewa Falls, Osseo and Mondovi. Last year, about 700 items were collected. The winter gear is distributed to groups and schools throughout the area.

Ornament trees also were placed at Eau Claire’s two clinic sites. Employees purchased gifts for four families and three nonprofit organizations based on wish lists written on the paper ornaments. The employee response has been overwhelming. “We are thrilled to get this opportunity to help people in our communities,” said Lynn Salter, chairperson of Luther Midelfort’s Employee Volunteer Committee. “By working together, we reach even more people in need.”

Employee Volunteer Committee members will wrap gifts at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6, in Luther Midelfort’s Materials Management Building. The media is welcome to film, photograph and interview members of the group as they wrap gifts. Call Susan Barber Lindquist at 838-3012 for directions.
Luther Midelfort, Eau Claire

*Luther Midelfort unveils new play area, medical kiosk at Oakwood Mall*

Shoppers will find a new look at the children’s play area and medical information kiosk, both sponsored by Luther Midelfort at Oakwood Mall.

The new play area theme is Luther Midelfort’s Oakwood Forest, complete with a Chippewa River bridge, oak tree, Mayo One helicopter and a medical tent. It will be open to the public by Saturday, March 31, 2007.

The new medical information kiosk has an open concept, allowing people to walk in and view videos and find health information. Consumers also can look up information on a computer that accesses Luther Midelfort and Mayo Clinic Web sites.

“We are proud that the play area and kiosk bring healthy activity and health information to the public in a community setting,” said Dr. Randall Linton, Luther Midelfort’s chief executive officer and president.
Luther Midelfort, Eau Claire

*Health care team works to prevent strokes*

At 7 a.m. on Thursday, May 17, 2007, the department stores at Oakwood Mall in Eau Claire are dark and empty. However, one section of the mall is brightly lit and bustling with activity as people gather to learn their risk of stroke.

Luther Midelfort—a certified Primary Stroke Center—offered the free stroke screening in recognition of Stroke Month. Just one of several stroke activities held during the month, the screening involved checking participants’ cholesterols levels, taking blood pressures, discussing family histories and distributing information regarding stroke risk factors.

Representatives from all facets of the stroke team were present, including a neurologist who specializes in stroke, a nurse practitioner, several RNs and LPNs, and rehabilitation therapists.

Keith Sommerfeld of Eau Claire was one of more than 50 people from the community who took advantage of the free screening. “The screening today was real good,” he says. “I appreciated the explanations. The information reinforced what my doctor told me, but it’s helpful to have a refresher.”

The screening told Keith he has a relatively low risk of stroke. However, if scores came back high, participants were referred to their primary care providers for more thorough testing.

“I realize that cost and staff time are problems,” Keith says, “but I really appreciate having the screening available. Thank you!”
Luther Midelfort, Eau Claire

Financial assistance program puts patient’s mind at ease

Larry Wagner of Elk Mound, Wis., and his wife, Agnes, weren’t prepared when Larry felt like he was having a heart attack. When they arrived at the Luther Midelfort Emergency Department, there were worried about Larry’s health, but Agnes had another concern — they did not have insurance or the means to pay a large hospital bill. “I told staff right away that we didn’t have insurance, but they said ‘don’t worry about that right now. We’ll talk about that when Larry is stable.’ There was never any pressure,” she says.

It wasn’t until after Larry was recovering from quadruple cardiac bypass surgery that a staff member explained the Financial Assistance Program. “We thought even $100 would help, so she helped us fill out the forms. Everyone was so willing to work with us,” Agnes says.

Today, Larry is back to feeling like his old self and is finishing up the cardiac rehabilitation program. And, their entire hospital bill — more than $100,000 — was covered by the Financial Assistance Program. “We are so thankful,” Agnes says.

The relief Agnes and Larry felt is best expressed in the following letter Agnes wrote to staff after Larry’s discharge:

“Larry and I cannot begin to have a few words to express how you have blessed us. When Larry had his heart attack, we were treated with respect, immediate procedures that spared Larry’s life, very tender care and with THE BEST medical wisdom and technology in the country!

We were amazed that people kept caring for us though they had no idea if we were going to be able to pay for their services. We were not slighted in the least way. No one badgered us.

Even on the day of discharge, social workers and pharmacists helped us through another hurdle of getting the meds Larry needed at home. It would have been at least one day before we would have had the money to purchase all those meds. But they arranged for our needs.

Now to top off all these blessings, our request for financial assistance came back with a complete canceling of our bill — all we could say was WOW!! How can words of thank you begin to touch the debt we owe? You are a picture of God’s great forgiveness. Thank you so much!!”

Gratefully,
Aggie
Luther Midelfort - Mayo Health System, Eau Claire

They need (and want) to know

It’s the topic that is difficult for parents to discuss with teen children. That’s why Registered Nurse Terri Owen, a nurse practitioner at Luther Midelfort’s Center for Women and Family Health, offers to share her expertise and sensitive approach to sex education with students in Eau Claire area high schools.

“Kids really want to know more, but they are embarrassed or hesitant to talk to their parents sometimes, and they have questions that need answers,” according to Owen. “I have always had a special interest in educating young people on sexually transmitted diseases and topics related to sex education, so I make myself available to schools that want to offer this education to their students.”

Owen said the presentation is most appropriate for 9th and 10th graders. She discusses the relationship aspect of sex, including differences in how males and females relate; pregnancy and the commitment a child requires; options for birth control; sexually transmitted diseases; and perhaps most importantly, she builds in time for questions and answers.
Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley, Bloomer

**Hazardous materials drill**

On October 2nd, 2006, Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley, formerly known as Bloomer Medical Center, participated in a hazardous materials regional drill. This drill was set up to educate city staff, county officials, and health care employees on how to coordinate and activate a decontamination plan and to successfully decontaminate individuals within the community. To prepare for the drill before it took place on the 2nd, those involved such as the Bloomer First Responders, Fire Department, Police Department, Ambulance Crew, Chippewa County Health Officials and the Luther Midelfort regional facilities, met to discuss the scenario and review duties during a hazardous material contamination. Once the scenario was set up and a date was chosen, all parties took the information back to their staff for rollout.

On the day of the event, the first responders were the first on the Bloomer High School scene where students were mixing chemicals in a photography lab and they spilled the chemicals and ingested the fumes. The police officer identified everyone present and noted that other students had left the premise after being contaminated. The students still at the school were decontaminated and taken to Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley for follow-up treatment. The HazMat Team and all staff present at the medical facility had been assigned roles at the Labor Pool and were ready to triage and treat those individuals arriving at the facility.

At other medical facilities in the area, students that had left the school before the first responders arrived were being decontaminated and treated as having been exposed to some sort of hazardous chemical. Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley held the wrap-up session after all victims were treated and stable. Each department shared any concerns or comments about how the process went. The team identified areas for improvement for future drills or if a real hazardous spill occurred. It was a great learning tool if this type of event were to occur, not only for the parties involved, but also for the surrounding communities in which people live and work.
"Senior Day: Taking Charge of Your Health," a free wellness event held last October in Barron focused on the importance of medication management. Luther Midelfort Northland, then Barron Medical Center, sponsored the event together with the Barron County Office on Aging and Barron County Aging & Disability Resource Center. All three facilities had identified the management of medications to be a major concern for the health and welfare of its area’s senior population.

"Helpful Hints for Managing Medications" was presented to the 29 participants by a hospital pharmacist. Other topics included "Supplements and Herbs" to help them learn more about how medications can be affected by the foods we eat as well as the dietary supplements we take. A benefit specialist presented information on, "Paying for Medications" and the various programs that help seniors afford their medications, including Medicare Part D, Wisconsin’s Senior Care, CWAG’s Prescription Drug Program and others. She also presented information about assistance for low-income seniors that reduces deductibles and monthly premiums.

Pharmacists were available to meet individually to answer questions and concerns about their medications and possible drug interactions. Participants were encouraged to bring in their prescriptions, along with a list of all the medications they were taking. The event concluded with a panel discussion with all the speakers to provide an opportunity for seniors to get answers to their medication questions.

A number of participants indicated they planned to share the information learned with other family members and friends. One woman indicated, "I now understand the importance of keeping an updated list of all my medications -- and making sure I take them as prescribed."
Luther Midelfort Oakridge, Osseo

Luther Midelfort Oakridge-Mayo Health System participates in community-wide organizations in mock car crash

Teens Against Destructive Decisions (TADD), an organization of Osseo Wisconsin high school students whose purpose is to promote healthy and positive lifestyle choices, decided that with proms and graduations quickly approaching in May, it was once again time to remind students of the impact of drinking and driving. As a result, a mock car crash was held April 19 at the Osseo-Fairchild High School. Approximately 350 students in grades 9-12 attended to witness the outcome when mixing drinking with driving.

Luther Midelfort Oakridge-Mayo Health System was directly involved in the planning and execution of the crash, where emergency personnel and other staff volunteered in simulated emergency care. “This exercise shows students how a car crash involving alcohol not only impacts the lives of those in the crash itself, but friends and family members as well,” said Kathy Sieg, parent volunteer and Luther Midelfort Oakridge-Mayo Health System employee.

“We did a simulation four years ago. The emotional reaction of the students and community was intense. It is time to recreate the experience for a new group of young drivers and the community,” said Juanita Rosenberg, TADD advisor with Osseo-Fairchild High School.

Many community organizations volunteered to help spread the word among the youth in the community about the impact of drinking and driving. Other organizations involved were: Osseo Police Department, Osseo Volunteer Fire Department, Osseo Salvage, Osseo First Responders, Wisconsin State Patrol, Schiefelbein Funeral Home, and Bridals and Bowties, who furnished the tuxedo worn by a prom “attendee.”

Following the presentation was a debriefing in the high school auditorium to inform students on what happens after the crash—the impact it would have—this is where the “rest of the story” was told.
Memorial Health Center, Medford

Health screenings save lives

For a few years, Lorraine Thomsen of Medford attended the Taylor County Senior Health Fair as her opportunity to gather new healthcare related information from local organizations and to take part in the health screenings. One screening Lorraine had always participated in was the free diabetes or blood glucose screening offered by Memorial Health Center. The year of 2006 was no different; Lorraine again had her blood glucose tested during this annual event, but this time the results were a bit concerning.

“I used to work at the hospital and knew a little about diabetes,” said Lorraine. “I changed my diet right away.”

Lorraine followed up in February with her health care provider, Kathy Hemer, nurse practitioner with Memorial Health Center. She retested her at that point and found that her levels were a little better, but still needed medical attention. To help her with nutrition management, Lorraine was scheduled with Memorial Health Center’s registered dietitian and diabetes educator, Rosalyn Haase.

“I learned a lot from Rosalyn about food planning to keep my diabetes under control through diet,” said Lorraine.

Each year Memorial Health Center reaches out to hundreds of local seniors during the Taylor County Senior Health Fair, sponsored by the Commission on Aging organization. Memorial Health Center has a very large presence at the health fair, including offering free health screenings. Over 245 people were screened during Memorial Health Center’s free diabetes screening in 2006.

“The screening was absolutely helpful,” said Lorraine. “The symptoms aren’t always obvious and if you don’t go to the doctor or participate in a screening somewhere, you’d never know you have diabetes.”

According to WebMD, an estimated 18.2 million people in the United States--6.3 percent of the population--have diabetes, a serious, lifelong condition. Of those, 13 million have been diagnosed, and about 5.2 million people have not yet been diagnosed. Each year, about 1.3 million people aged 20 or older are diagnosed with diabetes. If diabetes is not kept under control, devastating complications can result.

“If diabetes isn’t controlled, it can lead to very serious health conditions,” said Haase. “Poorly controlled diabetes is the number one cause of adult blindness and kidney failure, and non-traumatic amputations of the foot or leg. Stroke and heart attacks are the most frequent causes of death in people with type 2 diabetes. New research points to a link between poor diabetes control and Alzheimer’s disease.” Lorraine continued, “I feel much better now that I lost some weight and can control my diabetes without medication.”

Memorial Health Center, accredited by the Joint Commission, is a Critical Access Hospital serving Taylor, southern Price and parts of Clark and Marathon Counties in Wisconsin. Memorial Health Center was the recipient of the Ernest A. Codman national award in 2005 for diabetes care, a very prestigious award for healthcare organizations. Memorial Health Center was also the recipient of a National Rural Health Quality Award in 2006. Memorial Health Center is an Aspirus Partner.
Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County, Darlington

*MHLC Helps Local Musician*

Manny B. is a self-employed musician and for the last three years he and his fiancée, Laurie, have made their home in a small town in rural Lafayette County. With being self-employed, Manny and Laurie have had no health insurance coverage and had opted not to have regular medical care because of it.

“Because of the inability to afford health insurance, we’re in a difficult position,” relayed Laurie.

In the spring of 2005, after intense testing, Laurie was diagnosed with MS. If that wasn’t devastating enough, on the weekend of Thanksgiving 2005 after a performance in Illinois, Manny woke up that morning feeling very nauseous and dizzy. Laurie was very concerned, called the ambulance and Manny was rushed to the area hospital where he was diagnosed with having had a stroke. Manny returned to their home in Lafayette County after a 2-week hospital stay. He decided to follow up with further medical care at Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County (MHLC) in Darlington, Wisconsin. After having many consults by specialists and diagnostic testing, Manny and Laurie had accrued medical bills exceeding $10,000.00.

Over the course of the last two years, Manny and Laurie have always made payments towards their bills on a regular basis, but recently felt it was time to ask for additional financial assistance. After review of their cases by the finance and billing department of MHLC, the hospital was proud to contact Manny and Laurie and relay that they qualified to have their entire bill cleared.

“When I received the news that this huge bill would be forgiven,” Laurie proclaimed, “I cried. Manny was on the road, so I cried (happy tears) alone. It is such a huge burden lifted off our shoulders. We are truly grateful for this gift. We’re looking forward to trying to give something back to the hospital as a thank you. Although we cannot give cash to satisfy our bill, Manny (and I) can give the gift of music.”
Memorial Medical Center, Neillsville

*Training for the future: investing in education*

Experience in a rural medical setting is often required for students pursuing a health care career. For others, the rural experience might not be necessary, but access to a training facility located close to home is important. For both of these reasons, Memorial Medical Center in Neillsville serves as a training facility for students in universities, technical colleges and high schools.

Jason Tischer, a student at St. Mary’s University – Minneapolis Campus, is studying to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. To graduate, students must complete clinical, hands-on training in administering pain control measures such as nerve blocks and spinal injections.

“Clinicals are the only way we truly ‘become’ medical professionals, be it nurses or whomever. The real-world education that hospitals provide is what polishes our skills and independence, so it’s key that you open your doors to us,” comments Tischer.

Andy Arndt completed his internship in May. Staff in health information service, coding, accounts receivable, and transcription all worked with him, providing job shadowing and hands-on experience. Now graduated from Chippewa Valley Technical College with a degree in Health Information Technology (HIT), Arndt credits his training at Memorial Medical Center with helping him secure employment.

“Initially, the internship showed me how much more was under the umbrella of HIT. It was really important for me to have time in each department to feel capable. All said and done, I’m confident in my skill level, and I know that showed in my interview. That’s the advantage Memorial gave me, so thanks,” tells Arndt.

Our high school job shadow program underscores the value of academics in reaching career goals and helps students investigate different career paths. Jenny Schmidt, now a freshman in college, entered our program last year, with a special interest in physical therapy.

“I didn’t do any hands-on patient treatment, but I was right there watching the therapies. I’m lucky to start college with this higher level of know-how, and I’ll take every advantage I can get,” explains Schmidt.

Although Memorial Medical Center receives no monetary reimbursement for time spent educating youth, our return on investment is solid. We play a role in developing a knowledgeable, skilled, and compassionate health care workforce – from which an untold number will benefit.
Memorial Medical Center educates community on dangers of Methamphetamine

The United Nations has called methamphetamine “the most abused hard drug on earth.” It is one of the most significant health threats to men, women, young and old, rural and urban areas, and the rich and poor alike. In one of Memorial Medical Center’s most aggressive outreach programs, thousands of Wisconsin residents have now seen and heard the truth about the drug its own users call “the devil.”

“We didn’t wait until our emergency department was saturated with meth users. Treating this epidemic on a patient-by-patient basis wouldn’t work. We had to think bigger and act faster to reach people on a community-by-community basis. Our solution was to partner with the Clark County Sheriff’s Department,” explained Karen King, registered nurse and ER/OR supervisor at Memorial Medical Center – Neillsville.

In December 2005, Memorial began collaborating with the Sheriff’s Department and all Clark County municipal police departments to create a very real, eye opening program. Presentations were offered to the public free of charge. King and Sheriff’s deputies were as open as possible about the current drug activity levels, locations of methamphetamine dump sites, and number of seized labs.

To date, over 75 presentations have been made in five counties, reaching over 6,000 people via service organizations, medical facilities, law enforcement meetings, fire departments, schools, businesses, a regional Meth Summit, the Wisconsin Hospital Association’s West Central Hospital Council, and the Wisconsin State Police Association drug training.

On a local scale, our efforts contributed to healthier communities. In 2005 and early 2006, methamphetamine usage was on a steady increase in Clark County. By June of 2006, the Sheriff’s Department reported a leveling of methamphetamine activity, and soon thereafter, a continual drop. Clark County has now achieved a 90% decrease in overall meth-related activities. In addition, both Memorial and the Sheriff’s Department receive calls from both adults and students requesting information or providing tips to possible crime sites. At least one area school district plans to incorporate methamphetamine education into their permanent curriculum, with hopefully more to come.

Whenever possible, King still interviews meth users and dealers while they are in Sheriff’s custody. According to King, their stories are basically always the same. “Meth is the devil. I had no idea that using it one time would ruin my life. Stay away from it.” With their stories in mind, Memorial Medical Center continues educating people on the dangers of using meth, the signs of production, and the resources available for help.
Mercy Health System, Janesville

New partnership serves valuable need

In south-central Wisconsin, uninsured and underinsured individuals and families have a new place to find quality primary health care services. Mercy Health System, headquartered in Janesville, and Community Health Center, Inc., of Beloit, have collaborated in a joint effort to offer care at a sliding fee scale, and provide low-cost prescription drugs with the assistance of a federal drug program. Depending on eligibility, patients with high deductibles and major medical coverage may also benefit from the program. The center serves an estimated 6,000 individuals living in south-central Wisconsin in need of primary health care services.

Javon R. Bea, president and CEO of Mercy Health System, states, “After evaluating the continuing care needs of our community, we saw an important need for this kind of program. We hope this collaboration will set a precedent for the way primary health care is provided not only in our community, but also throughout the state.”

The collaborative program, which is the first of its type in Wisconsin, is headquartered at Mercy Clinic South in Janesville, also the home of the Mercy Health System Family Medicine Residency Program. The resident physicians and other staff offer services Monday through Friday, 8 am-5 pm.
Meriter Hospital, Madison  
*SANE Program*

For the past 19 years the Meriter Hospital SANE Program has been providing comprehensive forensic nursing services to adult (women and men) and child victims of intimate violence including victims of sexual assault (majority of victims), domestic violence and child physical abuse and neglect. These services are provided 24 hours/day, 7 days/week through Meriter’s Emergency Department. The program is the only program of its kind in Dane County. Meriter Hospital’s SANE staff will care for approximately 400+ sexual assault victims this year (2007). Fifty percent of these patients will be under the age of 17.

SANE nurses conduct examinations with a special understanding of the emotional and physical trauma that may be present after a sexual assault. If the victim wishes, the nurse gathers medical-forensic evidence that may be useful in court. SANE nurses assist victims with the many concerns following an assault, including the threat of sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy. If the victim wishes, the nurse will contact a rape crisis advocate, help the victim find a safe place to go, develop a follow-up medical plan, provide information on crime victim compensation and testify as an expert witness if the case goes to court.

The services provided by the Meriter Hospital SANE program significantly lessen trauma for victims by providing most needed services in one place and in a supportive environment, BUT a SANE program cannot work in a vacuum. It is essential that our program work within a collaborative framework with others who will be involved in the further care, investigation and prosecution of these cases. Local law enforcement, prosecutors, the crime lab and advocacy were all involved in the planning and implementation of the program and in its continued support.

This collaboration among agencies ensures that there is a comprehensive, organized response to the victim and the crime of rape.

As a result of the collaboration that exists with local law enforcement, prosecutors, the crime lab and advocacy, the Meriter Hospital SANE Program has been included in the orientation and ongoing education of staff of these various disciplines and visa versa. Such sharing of information enables the members of each discipline the ability to understand what services the others provide and to work more effectively together. This ultimately provides the victim with a more complete and supportive response.

The SANE Program also serves as an educational resource for the community. The SANE Program provides knowledgeable speakers to groups and organizations. These speakers present up-to-date information about intimate violence and its effects, as well as prevention, treatment and resources.

**Impact**
Total patients in 2006 = 430, 53% were children (less than 17 years of age)

**Lessons Learned**
Recruiting and retaining SANE has always been and will continue to be a challenge. The work is not something all nurses have a desire to do and can be very difficult (emotionally) to do over time. SANE are seeing the worst that an individual can do to another individual and often that individual is a child. Rape is the most significant insult to self short of homicide.
Future Goals
The sexual assault nurse examiner provides an unprecedented means of improving the response to many forms of interpersonal violence. Indeed, the training, skills and experience a SANE possesses can and are being used by the SANE in our program in the evaluation of cases of child physical abuse and neglect, domestic violence and elder abuse and in the evaluation of the suspects in these cases. Recruiting, training and maintaining an adequate SANE staff to care for the many victims of interpersonal violence is and will continue to be a goal and a challenge for the program.

Operating Expenses for Past Fiscal Year (2006)
$268,069

Funding (2007)
- Department of Justice / Victims of Crime Act: $102,257
- Forensic Billing (Law Enforcement and Prosecutors): $75,000
- United Way: $15,000
- Education Provided by SANE Staff: $10,000
- SANE Bills to Patients: $85,000
Meriter Hospital, Madison

Seal Dane

As a Madison, Wisconsin hospital and health care provider, Meriter cares deeply about health care access for all and that includes access to dental care. Meriter Health Services is very pleased to provide “Seal Dane”—a dental sealant program that reached children in our schools who don’t have a dentist.

The goals of Seal Dane are three-fold:
  • To provide dental sealant to children most at risk for tooth decay
  • To raise awareness of oral health hygiene and the effectiveness of dental sealant among parents, children and teachers
  • To serve as a catalyst for developing dental access programs in our city and county.

The Seal Dane Program is merely a first step in addressing dental care access problems that face many of our uninsured families of Dane County. But it is an important first step—because it reaches children who are most at risk. Take, for example, eleven year old Eric. When he went through a Seal Dane clinic at Lindbergh Elementary he had an abscessed tooth. He was in a great deal of pain. Meriter Health Services worked with Dane County Public Health to find Eric help. Since he spoke Spanish, an interpreter was found. The permanent molar was x-rayed and it was determined that he needed a root canal. The Seal Dane program found a dentist to perform the root canal and Eric was able to have sealant applied after his tooth was fixed.

Meriter has funded the program for eight years working closely with the County Health Departments and schools in Madison and Dane County to make this collaborative possible. Why are we doing this? We know from talking to school nurses how large of problem tooth decay is for children in our schools today. Children in pain from cavities or abscessed teeth can’t concentrate in school—and often they miss school. We also know from the Dane County Coalition for Neighborhood Child Health that the dental is the most common health problem identified during health checks. 44 percent of the children seen needed follow-up dental care for cavities, sealant and bite problems.

Meriter is proud to be associated with the volunteer hygienists and dentists from our community who have already contributed their time and energy to help Seal Dane and the children it reaches. We look forward to building further coalitions to tackle the dental access crisis in our community.
Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston
*Mile Bluff helps you live an active, productive, healthy life... with diabetes!*

Diabetes is a serious, but controllable lifelong disease that affects more than 17 million Americans. It is up to individuals to take control of their diabetes before it takes over their lives and health. Knowing how important it is for those with diabetes to keep up-to-date on treatment options, Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston provides a number of educational and support services to the community through its nationally-recognized Diabetes Self-Management Education Program. Almost all of diabetes care is self-care, and Mile Bluff teaches individuals to better control their diabetes so they are able to live life to the fullest.

**Diabetes Education at Mile Bluff**

Participants in Mile Bluff Medical Center’s Diabetes Self-Management Education Program are taught self-care skills that promote optimal diabetes management. The program is provided on an individual basis and through group sessions at Hess Memorial Hospital. The combination of support from the health care team and the knowledge gained through the education program allows individuals to assume an active role in their diabetes management. Good control of diabetes can prevent and/or delay both short and long-term complications of diabetes.

The program is not only for those who have been recently diagnosed, but also those who have had diabetes for a while and have poorly controlled blood sugars, have had or need a change in medications, or those who have good control of their diabetes and want to learn to do all they can to keep it that way!

Mile Bluff’s education team consists of a certified diabetes educator, registered nurses, a registered dietitian, and a licensed clinical social worker. This group works together to ensure a comprehensive approach to diabetes self-management is taken with each individual that enters the program. Topics covered by the education team include:

- The disease process & treatment options
- Nutritional management
- The importance of physical activity
- The use of medications for therapeutic effectiveness
- Monitoring of blood glucose and use of the results to improve control
- Prevention, detection and treatment of acute and chronic complications, and risk reduction
- Goal setting to promote health and problem-solving for daily living
- Psychosocial adjustment
- Preconception care, management during pregnancy, and gestational diabetes management

Throughout the year Mile Bluff also offers a variety of other programs to help those with diabetes. Monthly support group presentations are offered free of charge, and even include a tour of the grocery store with a nutrition expert to help participants sift through those hard-to-understand food labels. Free foot, blood sugar and blood pressure screenings are held at a number of health fairs throughout the year, and at special National Diabetes Awareness Month events.

**National Recognition**
The American Diabetes Association believes that diabetes self-management education is an essential component of diabetes treatment, and has once again awarded Mile Bluff Medical Center the American Diabetes Association Education Recognition for the high-quality diabetes self-management education provided in Mauston.

Assuring high-quality education for patient self-care is one of the primary goals of the Education Recognition program. Participants at Mile Bluff learn to assume a major part of the responsibility for their diabetes management, which can prevent the number of unnecessary hospital admissions and some of the acute and chronic complications of diabetes.

Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston continuously strives to serve the community with the perfect balance of big-city technology and personal, small-town care by providing benefits to the community through services such as the Diabetes Self-Management Education Program.
Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston

*Free screenings benefit the Mauston area*

**Balance, safety screenings help to keep seniors in their homes**
No one plans to fall, but many common conditions that affect seniors such as stroke, diabetes or arthritis can increase the risk of a fall. Knowing they’re at risk can add anxiety to every-day tasks and decrease quality of life. To help seniors gain the freedom and confidence needed to stay in their own homes, Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston offers free balance and safety screenings to all seniors in the community once a year.

The screenings are offered through the Rehabilitation Services Department, and include:
- Balance & walking assessments
- Medication reviews
- Kitchen safety assessments
- Blood pressure screenings
- Lower extremity sensory tests
- Cognitive assessments
- Hearing screenings

This comprehensive assessment is designed to assist seniors in minimizing their risk of falling and maximizing their independence and safety. The Mauston area is a popular place to retire, so in recognizing a need in the community, Mile Bluff stepped up to the plate to offer the benefit of these screenings, and in turn has helped many senior citizens learn to stay safe and independent in their own homes.

**Screenings address early childhood development**
There are an unlimited number of questions that come with parenting, and as parents, learning through personal experience – or the experience of others – many times is the only way to get answers. However, there are certain indicators that help determine whether a child is on the right path in developing their communication and motor skills that can be assessed by a professional. Parents commonly have questions about what the average age is for a child to begin: crawling, speaking words, walking, putting sentences together, running, reading, or skipping. To help parents get some of these answers, Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston offers free early childhood screenings twice a year. This service is open to all parents in the community with children birth to five years of age - whether a problem is suspected or not.

A speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist and audiologist from Mile Bluff’s staff each sets aside a full day to assess motor and communication skills of all individual participants. Children visit each of the stations to perform a number of fun activities, and parents have the opportunity to ask questions of each of the professionals. To follow up the screenings, ‘report cards’ are sent out and doctor referrals are obtained if needed.

The purpose of the screenings is to educate each parent on where their child’s development stands. If a challenge is identified early on, intervention can take over and in many cases, children will be up to speed in no time. Mile Bluff has offered these screenings for a number of years, and up to as many as one-third of the children have been able to benefit some sort of follow-up care, putting them back on the right track developmentally.

**Farming community benefits from free screenings**
In the agricultural communities of Juneau County, it is important to know that the farmers are safe, healthy and well cared for so they can continue to help the towns grow. To help with this, Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston offers free health screenings for farmers twice a year. Area farmers are given the opportunity to receive free cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure testing, and hearing, back and lung.

Mile Bluff offers the screenings as an educational tool for local farmers. Participants receive information on staying healthy on the farm and are screened to assess their current health. By teaching the skills necessary to prevent injury on the farm, the community is a safer, healthier, and more productive place. These free screenings are just one of the many ways Mile Bluff works to keep our area farmers healthy.

**PAD screenings save lives**
The awareness of Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) has been heightened over the past year and Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston was on board with the efforts offering free PAD screenings at two separate locations.

Peripheral Artery Disease is the abnormal narrowing or blockage of arteries, the blood vessels that deliver blood from the heart to the rest of the body. It often interferes with circulation of blood to the legs due to blocked arteries in the leg. When blood is restricted in the legs, oxygen supply to these muscles is limited as well. Muscles need oxygen to function properly and without an adequate blood supply, muscles may be painful and weak, especially during activity.

Poor circulation in the legs is much more important than one might think. Early detection of vascular disease in the legs may reduce the risk of stroke and heart attack, as well as improve a person's ability to walk and be active.

Peripheral artery disease may be detected using a simple, painless test called the ankle-brachial index or ABI. This test involves taking blood pressures of the arms and legs and then comparing the ratios, which can give an early indication of blockage. If needed, additional testing can be performed using CT scanning, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), or ultrasound scanning to make a diagnosis—all of which are available in-house at Mile Bluff.

The schedule for the screening day in Mauston was so full that another day of testing needed to be added so everyone who called could be tested. Thanks to the cardiologists who were on duty during the screenings, patients with severe cases could be seen right away and lives were saved.
Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston

Community requests add new support groups

IBS support group offers hope to many

Millions of Americans (around 20 percent of the female population) suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). Irritable Bowel Syndrome is a disease that carries a variety of symptoms such as abdominal pain, bloating, constipation and diarrhea. These symptoms occur due to damage, deterioration or inflammation of the nerve tissue in the bowels. Many people go undiagnosed for a year or more before learning of IBS.

Mile Bluff Medical Center is fortunate to have Dr. John Bryant Wyman - a gastroenterology specialist who has done extensive research on IBS and other diseases like it - visit Mauston every month. About 80 percent of his patients are seeing him for some form of IBS disorder.

After a request from a patient, and in attempt to meet the growing need in the community, Mile Bluff began an IBS support group that meets quarterly, is open to the public, and growing with each meeting. The group offers those living with IBS a chance to come together in a relaxed environment to learn new ways to cope from both a medical specialist, and others who are dealing with similar health issues. When asked about the group, Dr. Wyman said, “My hope would be that participants would come to the realization that they’re not alone and that it’s not a shameful disorder.”

Participants have taken full advantage of this benefit offered to them through Mile Bluff and have really opened up to each other, helping to encourage and support on another in their struggles and successes.

Offering support to those dealing with autism

The demands of raising a child with autism are great. Families frequently experience high levels of stress. Recognizing and preparing for challenges that may be in store make a tremendous difference to all involved: parents, siblings, grandparents, extended family, and friends. After a request from an area family, Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston took on the opportunity to offer support services to this growing segment of the population.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. It is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills.

Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. Autism affects each individual differently and at varying degrees.

It is estimated that nearly one in 150 children in America today have an autism spectrum disorder, and that about 1.5 million Americans and their families are affected. Our small communities are not immune to this. Autism knows no racial, ethnic, social boundaries, family income, lifestyle, or educational levels and can affect any family, and any child. Although the overall incidence of autism is consistent around the globe, it is four times more prevalent in boys than in girls.

The benefit of having local resources and others to share with has proved to be very beneficial in helping Mauston area families cope with the daily stresses of autism.
Monroe Clinic, Monroe

A new take in targeting men’s health issues

While the nation has grown increasingly aware of women’s health issues in recent years, reaching and educating men on health risks and disease prevention continues to be a challenge.

In order to specifically address men’s health needs in the community, Monroe Clinic physicians Dr. Kenneth Sparr and Dr. Andrew Rikkers took their message to the Southern Central Wisconsin Archers for a guys-only event on June 21, 2006. The evening was a part of Monroe Clinic’s ongoing HealthADVANTAGE Series, a program that offers health presentations and screenings, most often at no cost, to the general public. It was the second year for Men’s Night, as the prior year’s event took place at a local Harley Davidson dealership. The success of the first Men’s Night proved that there was a true thirst for men’s health information in the community.

“Taking health information and screenings to untraditional settings benefits men by exposing them to important information in a setting that is more comfortable, casual, and convenient,” explained Dr. Sparr, who presented at both the 2005 and 2006 Men’s Nights.

Men’s Night 2006 featured free blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and body mass index screenings. Dr. Sparr, a urologist, and Dr. Rikkers, a general surgeon, presented “Straight Talk: Get the Facts on Prostate Health, Groin Pain, and Heartburn.” In an unconventional take on the typical health presentation, the program also included demonstrations and tips on archery, as well as food and prizes.

Around 30 men came to the event, and the relaxed setting quickly weaved its magic. Men were soon asking questions and taking part in lively discussions.

“The men who had interest in finding out about their reflux disease as well as groin pain and hernias had good questions that other members of the audience also seemed to learn from as well,” said Dr. Rikkers.

Some of those in attendance even sought needed medical attention shortly after the event. “After my talk on prostate health, I found that several gentlemen came in to get treatment for their enlarged prostates that had been causing problems for years. They convinced some of their friends to come in to get checked also,” Dr. Sparr said.

The feedback from Men’s Night 2006 was extremely positive. The most common comment from the participants was that they were grateful for the presentation and appreciated the opportunity to come out and ask questions. The audience surveys confirmed that the men were hearing much of the presented health information for the first time in their lives.

Dr. Rikkers felt the conversational tone of the evening offered the audience the down-to-earth answers and straight facts they were looking for. “Discussions like these go a long way to help people in their daily lives,” Rikkers said.

As Dr. Sparr explained, “This event definitely reaches the ‘hard to reach’ men—the ones who tend to push aside or ignore health issues due to fear, anxiety, and embarrassment. It gives them a chance to see they are not alone in their experience.”
Moundview Memorial Hospital & Clinics, Friendship

Hospital food drive benefits those with low incomes

The holidays can be a solemn time for those on low incomes who are unable to afford special meals and celebrations. Some may receive assistance through food pantries, but others may be too embarrassed to ask for help or are determined to make it without government assistance.

Since 1997, employees at Moundview Memorial Hospital & Clinics have organized a food drive to benefit those individuals who sometimes fall through the cracks. The first drive was coordinated by the hospital’s rehabilitation staff, and other departments have taken turns as coordinators through the years.

In 2006 twelve area families benefited from Moundview Memorial’s food drive. From mid-November through mid-December, employees brought in cash donations, non-perishable food, and Christmas items ranging from stuffed animals to decorations. Contributions were also sought from a select number of area businesses including potatoes, cheese, and monetary donations.

Each year the department in charge of the food drive obtains the names of families who could use extra help during the holidays from local elementary school staff, hospital employees, churches, and other community service organizations. The department staff purchase perishable food items with cash donations and sort the canned and boxed goods and Christmas items into holiday decorated boxes. They then deliver the boxes to each family’s home. One year Santa delivered the items from the ambulance.

“Our food drives have benefited a variety of families including widowed senior citizens, single parents, those who have recently lost their job, persons who are ill or injured and large families,” says Dee Draeger, physical therapy assistant at Moundview Memorial’s Rehabilitation Department who helped start the hospital’s first food drive. “The hospital staff is very supportive of the food drives. Each family receives at least one week of meals and they are so grateful for the donation. It’s worth it to see a smile on their face and to know we made their holiday a little brighter.”
ProHealth Care (Oconomowoc Memorial and Waukesha Memorial Hospitals)

ProHealth Care parish and community outreach nursing

1. Doris* has lived independently for many years, and she wasn’t about to let anyone take that independence away, even at the age of 83.

A widow, she has no family in the area except for an ailing sister. A year and a half ago, she fell and fractured her hip. Then, in January, a ProHealth Care Parish nurse called her ailing sister before a visit to Doris’s home and discovered that Doris had fallen in the kitchen and had refused to go to the hospital.

The Parish nurse visited Doris and found she was suffering from dehydration and hypotension in addition to bruising herself in during the fall. The nurse explained how important it is for Doris to drink more fluids and take her medicine so that she can continue to live in her small ranch home.

With the help of Parish Nursing, Doris is able to maintain her independence.

*name has been changed to protect patient confidentiality

2. Elizabeth* could barely see the blackboard in her sixth grade class at school. Elizabeth’s family had recently moved from Milwaukee County to Waukesha County. Her mother was having trouble connecting to local service providers and her BadgerCare status was unclear. As a result, Elizabeth’s vision issue went unaddressed.

Elizabeth’s principal noticed the vision problem and called ProHealth Care Community Outreach nurse Hanneke Deeken, M.S.N., R.N.

Deeken reviewed the case and helped link her to services in the community. Elizabeth saw an optometrist and received new glasses. Her 20/300 vision has been corrected to 20/30, and she’s amazed at what she’s been missing. “I can finally see,” Elizabeth said. “I can even read that sign right over there!”

*name has been changed to protect patient confidentiality
Many Waukesha Family Practice Center patients struggle with a variety of financial constraints, often having to choose between paying their rent, buying food or paying for their medications. Without their medications, many find it difficult to continue working and meeting the daily needs of their families.

Many drug companies offer medications at a reduced cost or even free, but the process to apply can be very complicated. To help address this need, the Waukesha Family Practice Center developed a Patient Assistance Program. The program is presently assisting 182 patients acquire 448 medications that would be out of their reach without this program; 31% are diabetic and 19% are being medicated for high cholesterol. A typical high cholesterol medication could cost a patient more than $1,000 annually. The program processes paperwork for more than 20 different pharmaceutical companies on more than 90 different brand name and generic medications. In 2006, the program provided more than $334,000 worth of medications to our patients in need.

Providing medications for the underserved in the community often helps to stabilize or improve their medical condition. This is a tremendous benefit to the patient’s physical and mental well being and also helps them be more productive. Receiving their medications consistently at little or no cost can also result in fewer clinic visits, emergency room visits, and hospital stays.

The Waukesha Family Practice Center provides treatment to patients on a sliding scale, according to their ability to pay. The program is a partnership between Waukesha Memorial Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin.
Meeting the psychiatric needs of children in Waukesha County

In October 2000, a group of community leaders from Waukesha County Social Service Agencies and Waukesha Memorial Hospital met to discuss the unmet needs of children in Waukesha County. It was quickly determined that one of the greatest needs was behavioral health service for uninsured patients. Since then, Waukesha Memorial Hospital’s Behavioral Medicine Center has been reaching out to uninsured children and adolescents through its Psychiatric Assistance Program.

Jose is a 10-year old, Spanish-speaking boy who relocated from Mexico to Waukesha. When living in Mexico with his family, he witnessed his father physically abusing his mother. When trying to protect her, he too became a victim of his father’s abuse. Eventually, his parents separated and Jose had very little contact with his father. He developed a fear of going to school, suffered from headaches, and began to show his emotional tension through self-injury. School professionals referred him to the Waukesha Memorial Hospital’s Psychiatric Assistance Program for uninsured children and adolescents.

Thanks to the program, Jose was offered a treatment plan with a Spanish-speaking psychologist. Medication to treat his anxiety disorder was prescribed by a psychiatrist. When necessary, and to help with the language barrier, a Spanish-speaking translator from the hospital’s Interpreter Services was provided to assist Jose and his mother.

Teachers now report that Jose has become very confident in school, has made friends and is respectful of his peers. He is showing more effort and improved grades. Jose’s headaches have decreased and he is now able to talk about his physically abusive father and the fears he experienced in the past.

Jose is just one example of the growing number of children suffering because their emotional, behavioral and developmental needs are not being met. The cost of treatment is the most prevalent deterrent to seeking care. The Psychiatric Assistance Program provides psychiatric evaluation, medication management, medication and therapy (including bilingual therapy) for uninsured children and adolescents. The program serves patients age four through 17 who have no insurance. Most of the participating children are referred to the program by Waukesha County school system social workers, ProHealth Care parish nurses and partner agencies.

The program’s most common diagnoses are ADHD, bi-polar disorder, depression and anxiety. By improving the delivery of mental health services to these children and adolescents, the program has helped make the children more manageable at school and at home, and improves grades and behavior at school. Since 2000, the program provided more than 1100 outpatient visits, and the majority of its patients successfully completed their treatment. More than $200,000 has been provided towards meeting these needs. “The Behavioral Medicine Center at Waukesha Memorial Hospital has been, and remains committed to making a difference in the lives of all children, including those who have no insurance or means of payment for mental health services,” said Kathy Becker, Director of the Behavioral Medicine Center. “The Psychiatric Assistance Program has touched the lives of so many children and their families here in Waukesha County.”
Red Cedar Medical Center – Mayo Health System helped The Free Clinic of the Greater Menomonie Area open its doors to patients in March of 2005. Housed at the Medical Center, the Free Clinic sees up to 30 patients every Tuesday night. In 2006, the Free Clinic had 1212 patient visits; 416 of them were new patients. Of the 1324 volunteer hours given to the clinic, over 880 hours were donated by Red Cedar Medical Center physicians and staff. Furthermore, in 2006, providers referred 23 patients to their regular clinic practice at no charge.

In 2006, the Medical Center provided the Free Clinic with other assistance, including lab, radiology services, and prescriptions. The free clinic is funded by grants, in-kind donations, and community fundraisers.

In total, RCMC gave over $485,000* to charity care. In addition to helping the Free Clinic, the Medical Center helped over 150 patients pay their medical bills through the Financial Assistance Program.

About the Free Clinic
The Free Clinic’s mission is to provide access to primary health care and preventive health education for the people of western Wisconsin who have no health care alternative. Clinic staff focuses on disease prevention. They strive to teach people to take care of themselves through education and health screening services.

“I decided to get involved because there is a gap in health care in the US. People aged 18-65 may not have access to health care,” said Dr. James Walker, family physician at Red Cedar Medical Center and Free Clinic president.

Free Clinic services include health screenings, primary care, referrals for necessary health-related services, patient health education and referrals for necessary social services.

*All dollar amounts are at-cost charges
Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg

*Feelin’ Good Mileage Club*

Childhood obesity and lack of physical activity is an issue facing many other communities. Reedsburg Area Medical Center is helping address this issue locally, in a very creative way – with the sponsorship of the Feelin’ Good Mileage Club.

Feelin’ Good Mileage Club is a fitness program that successfully motivates young people (grades K – 5) to get fit and stay in shape through exercise. The program is simple. Several times each week at recess, elementary students walk and run on a designated track on the school playground. A volunteer, playground supervisor or older child marks children’s Mile Marker cards each time they complete a lap on the course and rewards are given at various mileage goals.

After initiating the program in elementary schools within Reedsburg and surrounding areas, Reedsburg Area Medical Center pays for and provides all of the materials, incentives and awards to help make this program successful and keep it motivating to students. Shoelaces, shoelace tokens (brightly colored plastic tokens worn on shoelaces), certificates and posters to celebrate the children’s accomplishments within the school and at home and other rewards all help kids keep moving and are provided by the Medical Center, to the schools. Besides fitness children also learn responsibility, mathematics (counting fractions of miles in laps), goal setting, record keeping skills and self-esteem building. Best of all, this happens while the child builds muscles, burns calories, burns off excess energy, reduces stress and learns good lifetime habits. But beyond all of this the kids simply enjoy the exercise and think it is pure fun!

To date, Feelin’ Good Mileage Club is up and running in five of the Reedsburg and surrounding elementary schools and continues to grow and expand. In fact, the enthusiasm generated from this program has expanded for requests for an adult program for school staff.

Indeed, this concept is an important one for Reedsburg Area Medical Center. When people’s fitness levels increase, self-esteem and self-image go up as well. A good place to start building a healthy and well-rounded community is by teaching children that exercise and fitness are fun. Reedsburg Area Medical Center is proud to play a part in that!
River Falls Area Hospital, River Falls  
*Free Clinic - brief history*

The idea to start a free clinic in River Falls was an outcome of conversations between River Falls Area Hospital ("Hospital"), the Kinnickinnic Valley Health & Education Foundation ("Foundation") and the River Falls Medical Clinic ("Clinic").

In November of 2005, during a strategic planning retreat with Foundation board members, “access to health care for the uninsured” was identified as a priority issue for the foundation. A few weeks later, a physician from the Clinic happened to cross paths with a former colleague who had helped start a free clinic in Menomonie, Wisconsin. A few short weeks after that, an employee of the Hospital came across a recent study indicating that Pierce and St. Croix Counties were among the worst in the state when it comes to the percentage of residents who were going without needed health care. It didn’t take long before the idea of a new free clinic emerged, and representatives of the Hospital, the Foundation and the Clinic were soon on their way to Menomonie to visit with the staff and volunteers of the free clinic that had been operating there for just under one year.

The visit to Menomonie convinced the representatives of these three organizations to move forward with the project, and they immediately started work to establish a steering committee to assume responsibility for planning for the clinic. The steering committee included representation not only from the hospital (five hospital staff, including the hospital president, served on the steering committee), the foundation, and the clinic, but also from the public health departments, human services, the legal profession, the business community, the clergy, and the community at-large.

Monthly meetings of the steering committee began in April of 2006. A name (Free Clinic of Pierce and St. Croix Counties) and a mission statement for the clinic were approved at the May meeting; the mission approved was “to provide primary health care and preventative health education for the people of Pierce and St. Croix Counties who have no health care alternative.” Bylaws were approved in July and incorporation papers were filed in August.

In October of 2006, the Foundation designated the proceeds of its fall fundraiser – the Harvest Moon Barn Dance – to support the Free Clinic. Hundreds of people turned out for the event, which netted more than $50,000. The Foundation also agreed to act as fiscal agent for the Free Clinic while it awaited a 501(c)3 determination from the IRS. In November of 2006, the Foundation was awarded a $50,000 grant through the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health to support the Free Clinic. (It is of note that the Foundation’s contributions to this effort are also indirect contributions of the Hospital, which covers all of the Foundation’s administrative expenses.)

In January of 2007, the Steering Committee was disbanded and a permanent Board of 20 Directors was elected. All five of the hospital staff who served on the steering committee were elected to remain on the permanent Board, filling three of the four seats on the executive committee. The first paid staff members were also hired, including a part-time Clinic Manager and a part-time Volunteer Coordinator. These staff are actually employed by the hospital and leased back by the Free Clinic; this provides the staff with access to health care and retirement benefits, and relieves the Free Clinic of the burden of maintaining a human resources function.

The Free Clinic was granted 501(c)3 status in March of 2007. The Free Clinic opened its doors on April 24, 2007. Volunteers at the weekly Clinic are providing primary health care, including lab and x-ray services donated by the hospital, and prescription drugs to an average of 20 patients each week.
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

*Highlighting the hidden hazards of toys*

According to the most-recent data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), almost 73,000 children under the age of five were treated in emergency rooms for toy-related injuries in 2005. Hazards such as magnets and lead can lead to injury and death if a child swallows them. But surprisingly, some toy manufacturers still use these types of materials in their products, leaving it up to parents and other caregivers to distinguish which toys are safe and unsafe for children to play with.

To bridge this gap, Sacred Heart Hospital’s Center for Healthy Living partnered with the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group (WISPIRG) to host a community event to raise awareness and educate parents and caregivers about the hidden hazards found in some of the most popular children’s toys.

The event, which took place right before the busy 2006 Christmas toy-buying season, was the first time Sacred Heart Hospital had partnered with WISPIRG, and the hospital plans to continue the relationship for many years to come.

Paula Pater, Sacred Heart Hospital’s Center for Healthy Living representative, explains. “Our goal is to provide education and information to parents and caregivers that can help prevent unintentional injuries to children,” says Paula Pater. “Working with WISPIRG on the toy safety hazards program was a perfect fit for us.”

Sacred Heart Hospital’s community event provided the forum for WISPIRG to distribute its annual Trouble in Toyland report to community members. The report included safety guidelines for purchasing toys for small children and provided examples of toys currently on store shelves that pose potential risks.

Attendees also learned about several categories of toy dangers: toys that pose choking hazards, toys with powerful magnets, toys that contain lead, and toys that pose strangulation hazards. In addition, the community event garnered a great deal of local media exposure, spreading the word about toy hazards to tens of thousands of households in the western Wisconsin area.
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire
Preparing meals for seniors that nourish body and soul

As the saying goes, the key to someone's heart is through his or her stomach. This adage rings true for countless senior citizens in Eau Claire County who receive home-delivered meals through the area’s Meals on Wheels program. For more than 12 years, Sacred Heart Hospital has been partnering with the Eau Claire County Department on Aging and Resource Center to provide meals to seniors in the area who are homebound and don’t have the means to cook for themselves. Sacred Heart Hospital prepares the meals, which county volunteers then deliver to home residences and senior centers throughout the week.

In 2006 alone, 115,140 meals were prepared and delivered to seniors in need.

“This program is so much a part of our hospital’s Franciscan mission: To serve the sick, the aged, the poor and the terminally ill without regard to race, color, creed or national origin,” says Rick Beckler, director of hospitality services, Sacred Heart Hospital.

The food-delivery program has expanded over the last few years to include delivery of “sack lunch” meals during the weekends, as well. Sacred Heart Hospital also provides free quarterly “lunch and learn” sessions at designated senior centers, during which time Sacred Heart Hospital experts from occupational therapy, physical therapy and nutrition services lead discussions with seniors on various health-related topics. (The hospital’s nutrition services team also makes birthday cakes for seniors in the program, to help them celebrate their special day.)

“With our expertise and our resources, we’re able to assist in the health and wellness of the seniors in our community,” adds Rick. “That’s a true value of Sacred Heart Hospital.”

To be eligible for the Meals on Wheels program, participants must be 60 years of age or older, live in Eau Claire County and be homebound.

“Many of our seniors have special dietary needs,” says Ruth Kilness, nutrition program supervisor, Eau Claire County Department on Aging and Resource Center. “Sacred Heart Hospital has been very accommodating, and the hospital’s dieticians are a valuable resource for us.”

Seniors involved in the program often send in letters of gratitude, expressing their appreciation. “You are always very thoughtful in providing special meals for holidays and other occasions,” writes one senior group. “We appreciate the great service each and every day of the week. It’s remarkable how you keep up with our fluctuating meal counts!”

Another participant writes, “I live alone. Getting a meal and receiving it from the volunteer drivers always makes my day.”

Sacred Heart Hospital has been awarded a three-year renewal with the Eau Claire County Department on Aging to continue providing meals for seniors, ensuring that the future of this community program, and those who benefit from it, remain strong.
Imagine how difficult it would be to tell your three-year-old that Santa cannot bring presents this year. This is exactly what many parents in need right here in Eau Claire are forced to tell their children, simply because they don’t have enough money to cover their family’s basic needs. Though the reasons may vary—a job loss, an illness, a spouse’s death—the sorrow felt is universal.

Sacred Heart Hospital recognizes this reality and for more than a decade has been organizing a centralized effort through a partnership with the St. Francis Food Pantry in Eau Claire to bring holiday cheer to families who need it most.

The program is called “Sponsor-A-Family” and the process is simple: Sacred Heart Hospital’s Center for Healthy Living team receives a list of families’ gift requests from St. Francis Food Pantry representatives who work with families to identify their biggest needs and compile wish lists. The wish lists are then distributed throughout the hospital to departments interested in “sponsoring” a family. Staff members purchase items on the lists, wrap the presents and deliver them to the St. Francis Food Pantry for distribution.

Even though many families receive gifts through this program, there’s only so much money to go around, which means that inevitably some families do not receive help. But in 2006, a surprise gift from a local family in the form of a $5,000 check made its way to the hospital one week before Christmas. Sacred Heart Hospital used this donation to help 17 additional families who had called the hospital directly, asking for assistance.

“This donation was wonderful, because so often the week before Christmas, we have nothing to give to families who call us for help,” says Heidi Larson, secretary at Sacred Heart Hospital’s Center for Healthy Living.

In total, more than 30 Sacred Heart Hospital departments (including 494 staff members!) purchased gifts totaling more than $15,000 for approximately 50 families in need during the 2006 program. Families included single moms, moms-to-be, families with both mom and dad, as well as single dads and legal guardians.

“There’s no way that we could provide the caliber of giving that we’re able provide, without Sacred Heart Hospital’s help,” says Michelle Gribble, executive director of the St. Francis Food Pantry in Eau Claire. “The magnitude of gifts the hospital provides is so much greater than what we could give families on our own.”

A thank-you note from a mom sums it up well: “Words cannot express my thanks to you all for the wonderful Christmas you brought my family this year. We have gone through so much this past year that it has been extremely difficult for me to regain my faith in humanity. I felt very alone with nowhere to turn. Your generosity showed me there are people out there that care.”

“We get calls from many families who are living in their cars or elsewhere and have no hope for anything,” says Marcia Arneson, coordinator of Sacred Heart Hospital’s Center for Healthy Living. “Their stories are heart-wrenching. But through donations and our employees’ generosity, we’re able to give these families hope.”
In addition to partnering with the St. Francis Food Pantry during the annual Sponsor-A-Family program, Sacred Heart Hospital physicians and staff donated more than 1,700 pounds of food and 35 turkeys during the hospital’s 2006 Thanksgiving Food Drive. Hospital staff also donated approximately $1,440 to the pantry during the food drive, which equates to more than 9,500 pounds of food that can be purchased to help nourish families who need it most.
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

Continuing needed patient care even when benefits run out

Like a sudden snap in a power line, a stroke sent 60-year-old Joann Lehman to Sacred Heart Hospital on November 9, 2005, startling everyone around her. “She was so healthy, the last person you would expect to have a stroke,” says her daughter, Julia. Two days later, on November 11, a Critical Care nurse spotted signs of rising intracranial pressure (pressure exerted by the cranium on the brain tissue). The surgeon was notified and, within hours, a neurosurgical procedure allowed the brain to swell without further damage.

Joann’s family maintained a vigil in Sacred Heart Hospital’s Center for Critical Care where each minute was “a world of uncertainty” as they waited to see if the surgery had been successful. The hospital’s team allowed family members to be with Joann at all hours: massaging her feet and hands, playing music, reading and talking to her. “I firmly believe allowing our family to be so involved with her care helped pull her through this crisis,” says Joanna Enerson, another daughter. Having been an intensive care nurse herself, Joanna appreciated the extra time the nursing staff and physicians spent in answering questions, explaining procedures and reassuring and caring for the whole family.

After fourteen days in intensive care, Joann was able to move on to the hospital’s rehabilitation floor where she spent more than three months in physical therapy. She made many friends, including a nursing assistant who began her 5:30 a.m. shift by helping Joann shower and get ready for her day. “She always had a laugh and a story,” says Joann. Her family was astonished by her progress: in four months she went from being dizzy when she sat up in bed to walking unassisted with a cane.

Joann was not quite finished with her rehabilitation therapy when she was given notice that her insurance benefits would soon end. She left the hospital, spent two weeks in a nursing home, but then returned to the hospital for one more week of intensive physical therapy, a gift from Sacred Heart Hospital and an example of joining clinical practices with the sacred healing mission of the Franciscan Hospital Sisters.

Joann is home now and thinking about her garden of flowers; she might even plant some tulips in the safety helmet she once wore to cover the missing piece of skull. She stops to visit her friends at the hospital when she can. Her family wrote a letter to Sacred Heart Hospital, thanking everyone from physicians and nurses to waiting room volunteers and Critical Care cleaning staff: “The core values of your hospital — respect, care, competence and joy — are reflected every day in the care your staff provides.”
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire
Faces of Compassion: Haesung Won
By Nancy Neenan Michaels

Hours after arriving from South Korea to study English at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Haesung Won fell into a coma, unaware that around her bed at Sacred Heart Hospital, a surrogate family was forming. UWEC students and staff, clergy, and hospital employees had gathered together in support and compassion for the young girl on her own in a strange country. Dr. Kamal Thapar, who performed the life-saving surgery to remove the blood clot pressing on the left side of her brain, explained to the St. Paul Pioneer Press (in a story on September 19, 2006), why they rallied around the young woman, “She could have belonged to any of us, but she belonged to none of us.”

The then 22-year old student suffered from an arteriovenous malformation, an abnormal collection of blood vessels in the brain that can cause a fatal hemorrhage at any time without warning. When Haesung’s parents arrived, after a 17-hour trip from South Korea, they found her unconscious, a still form surrounded by machines and wires. “The whole world tumbled,” said her mother, Young Sook Lee.

As her classmates began the final week of the UWEC language program, Haesung opened her eyes. Pressure on the brain had caused her to lose some speech and physical skills, but with the help of Sacred Heart’s therapy team and the consistent faith of her mother in her abilities, Haesung thrived. The hospital’s computer staff installed a laptop in her room to translate English into Korean. Among a group of volunteers who rallied around Haesung was Chang N. Ju, a fellow South Korean whose own son had been in a coma for 33 days before moving on to physical therapy. “Everybody loves their children,” said Ju. “I wanted to help as much as I could.” The growing expenses of Haesung’s hospital stay were covered in part by a UWEC insurance policy that all foreign students carry and by Sacred Heart’s Charity Care program where the hospital provides close to $6 million dollars annually to those in need. “It was a very unfortunate setting under the worst of circumstances,” said the Rev. Lawrence Dunklee, a Catholic priest and hospital chaplain. But Sacred Heart’s mission every day is to recognize, understand and respond to concerns, fears and barriers with care and compassion.

Haesung Won returned in November to South Korea, a country familiar to the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. The Japanese Sisters work, with the Franciscan Fathers, in a nursing home for the poor and elderly in the Diocese of Kwangju, located 125 miles north and east of Haesung’s hometown of Daegu.

Haesung’s doctors are confident she will recover fully and pursue her goal of becoming a third-grade teacher. “This girl’s going to recover and she’s going to do everything that’s in her destiny,” said Dr. Thapar. “People can make a difference . . . In this hospital, in this small town, we worked as ambassadors of good will,” Thapar said (St. Paul Pioneer Press, 10/19/06) “You can change the world in a profound way. And it doesn’t take tools or special skills, just a will and goodness.
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

Reusing and recycling food scraps for animal feed: Sacred Heart Hospital’s environmental stewardship benefits local farm

Sacred Heart Hospital’s “green” initiatives are cutting costs and helping others-ranging from a remote hospital in Mongolia to a small farm in Mondovi. The hospital’s “Green Team” works to identify innovative green best practices and launch initiatives that reduce, recycle and reuse. The projects further the hospital’s Franciscan commitment to respect creation and safeguard its people by protecting the environment.

Rather than filling the landfills, used hospital equipment is often donated. For example, a hospital in Mongolia recently received a badly needed sterilizer donated by Sacred Heart Hospital through the Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach. This strategy of reusing and recycling is also being used with food. All kitchen grease is recycled and more than 140 pounds of food are donated daily to the St. Francis Food Pantry. Until recently, other food scraps were thrown away.

Mark Nelson, CPFM, DM, a nutrition services assistant team leader at Sacred Heart, noticed the hospital’s cafeteria produced hundreds of pounds of food scraps weekly. Disposal costs ran into the thousands of dollars and the scraps ended up in the landfill or down the drain. Nelson wondered if leftover scraps could be used for livestock feed. He consulted with other facilities, researched city ordinances and state laws, and began contacting local farmers. Julie Torgerson, of Eagle Haven Ranch, was interested and volunteered to pick up the food every two days. In July, the first month, more than 1,400 pounds of table scraps fed the chickens, horses, calves, ducks and rabbits at Eagle Haven Ranch. The hospital collects between 80 to 120 pounds of food scraps for Torgerson daily.

“It's a win-win-win,” says Nelson. “The animals are very pleased with the food. Julie’s feed bill is going down. Sacred Heart Hospital’s garbage bill is decreasing. Less trash is being hauled and less fuel is being used to dump the scraps in the landfill. Fewer scraps are going down the disposal into the drain, a savings that may show up in reduced sewer assessments.”

Rick Beckler, director of hospitality services at Sacred Heart Hospital, explained the connection to purpose. “We all have a stake in a clean environment. As an inheritance that we pass down to later generations, we have a great ethical responsibility right now. The health and happiness of people tomorrow depend upon our ability today to reduce, reuse and recycle in the midst of economic, industrial and scientific progress.”

Sacred Heart Hospital Spiritual Care Director and Mission Integration Director Father Larry Dunklee, MA, MDiv, added, “Sacred Heart Hospital carries out this ecological mission and stewardship in the spirit of St. Francis. Our concern for ecological responsibility follows from our commitment to a consistent respect for the life and the dignity of the human person, an ethic which extends respect for all creation.”
Saint Joseph’s Hospital, Marshfield
Clinical Care Nurse Preceptorship: Training Tomorrow’s Workforce

In May 2007, Spectrum ran a story on the different ways Saint Joseph’s Hospital supports the training of health care professionals of tomorrow. This month, we focus on a training program that’s helping students further their careers in nursing.

Terry Annis, heart care clinical manager and certified clinical nurse specialist at Saint Joseph’s Hospital, is currently a preceptor to Jackie Pfeifer, a registered nurse who’s training to become a clinical nurse specialist (CNS).

Pfeifer is in a graduate program, pursuing a Master of Science degree in nursing. She’s in a medical surgical acute care tract for a clinical nurse specialist role, which is an advanced practice role. “In order to become a clinical nurse specialist, after the students graduate, they must take a certification exam for their particular specialty,” said Annis. “This is one of the protected titles under the advanced practice nurse role, which includes the titles of nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife and the clinical nurse specialist.”

“What I am doing is providing Jackie a clinical practicum education so that she can fulfill the requirement in order to graduate and to take the certification exam,” added Annis. Jackie has nearly completed seven semesters, including 500 clinical hours for this program.

“I take an online class through Texas Christian University. I do the didactic component in the online classroom, and then Terry helps me apply what I learn in the clinical setting,” said Pfeifer. She said she works anywhere from 6 – 10 hours a day, one or two days a week. She added that a typical semester consists of 180 clinical hours, completed within in 10 – 14 weeks. “Coming from a staff nurse position in the surgical care unit, I’ve been able to see more of a global perspective of patient populations rather than focusing just on the critical care patients. “I can see their progression throughout their hospitalization, the different types of patient populations that are affected, and lots of initiatives that are coming from Ministry and out of clinical care,” said Pfeifer. “It’s amazing how much thought goes into certain decisions, and there’s a lot of behind-the-scene work that goes into a lot of the decision-making process.”

Some of the objectives of the course include:

- Continuously improving patient care processes that can benefit the system
- Integrating change strategies throughout the system
- Developing policies and procedures that enhance the practice of nurse providers and the interdisciplinary team
- Developing, piloting, evaluating and incorporating innovative models of practices appropriate across the continuum of care
- Developing evidence-based and best practice models, ensuring all stakeholders share a common vision of practice outcomes

Once her preceptorship is complete, Pfeifer plans on presenting her thesis statement in Texas at the end of July. She then graduates, and she plans to take the American Association of Critical Care Nurses - Clinical Nurse Specialist certification exam in October. She will then continue her employment at Saint Joseph’s Hospital in the new role as a critical care clinical nurse specialist.
Annis said that while many nurses at Saint Joseph’s Hospital are pursuing advanced degrees, several follow the nurse practitioner tract and leave to explore private practice or clinics.

In order for a graduate student to complete their clinical in an approved setting, they must work with someone who meets the qualifications to be their preceptor/mentor. In this case, it has to be someone that has their Master’s degree in nursing and is functioning in an advanced practice nurse role, said Annis. She said there’s usually no more than one student in a preceptorship at one time, since there are so many hours involved in such a short period of time, and the mentor needs to be able to provide time for guidance and to work together on the projects.

When Pfeifer completes the program, Annis has plans to preceptor another graduate student. Annis said it’s important to find a site that will provide the clinical experiences that meet their objectives.

“We don’t have a lot of CNSs in the Ministry system,” said Annis. “The nationwide volume of clinical nurse specialists is very limited. Saint Joseph’s has the opportunity to “home grow” a staff person who is interested in pursuing Master’s level education and career advancement within the organization.”

“Terry’s been a tremendous help in guiding me through the nuances of the organization, helping me look at the global perspective,” said Pfeifer. “Everything has been very positive.”
Saint Joseph’s Hospital, Marshfield

Ground Zero for training health professionals

If someone asked you where countless clinicians are being trained, in virtually all levels of health care, what would you tell them? If you answered Saint Joseph’s Hospital, you’re correct.

Simply put, Saint Joseph’s Hospital trains the health care professionals of tomorrow. That’s also one of the main reasons why the hospital is identified as a leading-edge facility in this region and the state of Wisconsin.

“In a year’s time, we have between 800 and 1,000 students coming here for training,” said Terri Richards, executive vice president at Saint Joseph’s Hospital. “We train a wide variety of students, from entry-level nursing assistants through professional-level staff, including nurses, pharmacists, and physical therapists. We also train students in nuclear medicine, radiology, and radiation oncology. We partner with UW-Eau Claire to offer a Bachelor of Science nursing program on the Marshfield campus.

Richards said SJH and Marshfield Clinic jointly sponsor a graduate medical education program with 50 to 60 medical residents on the campus at any one point in time. The GME program has residents in Pediatric, General Internal Medicine, Surgery and Dermatology, to name a few.

“In almost every clinical setting, our staff is engaged with training some level of health care provider. It is so integral to how we deliver care,“ she added. The number of students that we train also includes nursing assistants, health unit coordinators, OR techs, as well as EMTs and paramedics.”

“Philosophically, as an employee that works at Saint Joseph’s, you have to recognize that part of your mission is not only to take care of patients, but that you will also be called upon to serve as an instructor for students and new employees. This helps many employees stay on the cutting edge because they not only have to be professionally more knowledgeable, it also creates a non-stop learning environment,” added Richards.

The hospital offers a critical care nursing residency program to experienced registered nurses or new graduates with a formalized multimodality nine-month paid program in critical care. The program combines classroom, simulation lab, online, and on-the-job clinical training in a tertiary care environment.

The 12-month pharmacy residency program offers five-week rotations of core and elective experiences, and each resident makes four formal presentations to the staff: one on a new drug, two on drug therapy, and one on their research project. A preceptor advisor is required for each presentation.

Saint Joseph’s Hospital is also partnering with Mid-State Technical College to offer a unique educational opportunity for nurses returning to practice following a lengthy absence, seeking to upgrade their skills, changing practice areas or orienting to another specialty area. The nurse refresher series program consists of a series of one-credit and two-credit courses designed to assist nurses to update their knowledge and skills.

The Nuclear Medicine Technology program at Saint Joseph’s Hospital provides didactic training that encompasses nuclear medicine procedures, patient care, radiation physics, radiation safety, radiation biology, quality assurance, instrumentation, and computers. It also provides a clinical setting where
students can apply their didactic knowledge with team building, critical thinking, and effective communication skills. SJH also offers an on-site two-year Radiology Technologist training program.

“We are not only providing care to our patients and families,” added Richards. “Our staff serves as role models and instructors for students, whether they’re nursing students, CNA’s, EMTs, or radiology techs … we train people in every area of the hospital, it is who we are as caring and learning health care providers,” said Richards.

She said that Ministry Education and Development has assisted with contract reviews and formal agreements, and interfaced with student group, to assist the success of the training programs.

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Saint Michael’s Hospital/Ministry Medical Group, Stevens Point
Ministry Health Care and Roosevelt School partner for better student health

As part of their 2006-2007 Team Nutrition and Physical Education/Activity Project, Roosevelt IDEA School has partnered with Saint Michael’s Hospital and Ministry Medical Group in Stevens Point, who supplied pedometers to all 65 fourth graders at the Plover elementary school. Grant monies through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will help support the year-long program and the purchase of educational materials.

“The 10,000 steps walking program and pedometer partnership was a natural for the ‘activity’ portion of this project,“ said Brant Bergeron, Director of Public and Community Relations for Ministry Health Care. “With the success 10,000 steps has seen throughout the area the past few years, getting people up and walking, there’s no better way for Saint Michael’s Hospital and Ministry Medical Group to support Roosevelt, the health of their students, and this DPI grant.”

“We are going to walk around the world,” said Faye Miller, fourth grade teacher at Roosevelt IDEA School. “The fourth graders have a big map up, and we are going to put up charts to keep track of our steps and figure out how many steps equal a mile. We’ll then convert the steps to miles to check out our distance and monitor our progress,” Miller said.

A picnic at the end of the school year is planned to celebrate the success of the program, and the teachers and children will be recruiting as many friends and family members as possible to participate in the Walk Wisconsin event on June 2, 2007. (www.walkwisconsin.com)
Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital, Prairie du Sac

*Sauk Prairie Memorial’s Community Care pays medical bills for family in need*

In the mid 1990s, with their three teenagers still at home, Gina and Bill Peterson* were blindsided with a calamity of health problems that forced each of them to leave work because of disabilities. They were still in their 40s.

Further health concerns arose and the couple struggled to stay afloat in a sea of welling medical bills.

Thankfully, a glimmer of hope emerged recently in the form of Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics’ (SPMHC) Community Care program. Bill and Gina learned the program would pay their medical bills—now and into the future. So far, Community Care has paid more than $5,000 in medical expenses on behalf of the Petterns.

SPMHC’s Community Care program assists patients by paying a portion or all of their medical bills, awarding more than $1 million in medical bill relief to hundreds of patients in 2006.

Financial relief came after years of health problems suffered by both of the Petterns. Their nightmare began in 1994 when Bill suffered a fractured skull in an industrial accident, and three years later, brain damage and a broken back and neck as a result of a motorcycle collision. Gina, who worked as a nursing assistant at the time, struggled to care for her disabled husband, mother her three children, and manage finances and household duties.

“A couple of years after his last accident, I just got so that I couldn’t work anymore and keep up with everything,” she said. “I was so worn out physically and mentally that I had a breakdown.”

Still, the Petterns hadn’t yet hit rock bottom. Their onslaught of health problems continued to mount, and this year, culminated in six surgical procedures to treat a myriad of serious problems. Along with each surgery came more bills.

In 2007, surgeons repaired herniated disks in Gina’s back and operated on her arthritic shoulder. Between each procedure, Gina cared for Bill, who underwent four heart procedures in four months.

“He’s had four surgeries since February to put stents into clogged arteries in his heart and arms,” she said. And, while Medicare covered the lion’s share of these medical expenses, it didn’t cover everything. “We pay around $200 a month just for prescriptions,” she said. “One bill from surgery was $58,000. Medicare covered all but $900 of it. I kept paying $50 per month on the medical bills, but they just kept adding up.”

As a low-income couple, the Petterns maintain they couldn’t afford supplemental insurance to pick up costs not covered by Medicare. They admit, they could barely handle monthly medication costs. Fortunately, the Petterns discovered they qualified for Community Care.

“Community Care represents the hospital’s commitment to improving the health of our community,” said Linda Ward, patient financial specialist at SPMHC. “One of the most tangible ways we can do this is to recognize people who may be struggling to pay medical bills. We can help determine if our patients can get financial help from local, state and federal healthcare programs and we can help them apply for our Community Care or other discount programs.”
Ward worked closely with Gina to help her apply for Community Care—an easy process, according to Gina. “I just completed a sheet outlining our budget and detailed our income and monthly bills. I am terribly relieved we qualified because we are low-income and it was very hard to keep up with our medical expense payments,” she said.

How are the Petersons feeling today? Much better, attests Gina. Not only are they relieved to be free of their debts, they are gaining strength physically day by day.

“The MRI of my shoulder showed that it was full of arthritis and bone spurs,” she said. “I had so much pain I couldn’t bend my arm.” Thanks to surgery and therapy, Gina reports her arm is healing well, but the process is slow. Moreover, surgeons successfully alleviated 80 percent of her back pain as a result of her back surgery earlier this year.

While Bill still struggles to find his words as a result of brain damage suffered years ago, Gina said he is doing well following his heart procedures and that medications benefit him immensely. It appears there is finally a light at the end of the tunnel, according to Gina.

**Do You Qualify for Community Care?**

In less than two weeks, patients of Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics know whether they qualify for Community Care financial assistance. For more information call 608-643-7157.

The application process is simple:
- The Hospital identifies any uninsured, underinsured, or self-pay patients;
- Patient completes application/determination of eligibility form;
- Patient completes a financial statement that includes income, assets, and liabilities;
- Hospital considers federal poverty guidelines and family size;
- Designated hospital staff interview patient to assess if the patient has the ability to pay in full, has the ability to pay reasonable monthly installments, or qualifies for Community Care;
- Patient receives notification.

*Names changed to ensure patient confidentiality.*
Southwest Health Center, Platteville

Southwest Health Center’s athletic trainers provide vital services to high school sports teams

They’re not wearing the uniform but they can be found close to the field at the home football games in Platteville. Their 3-point shot isn’t too sharp but they rarely miss a home basketball game at Cuba City High School. They are not coaches but the team looks to them for expert advice on how to maximize their playing potential – particularly when someone has a health concern or injury. They are Certified Athletic Trainers and for the past two years, these Southwest Health Center professionals have been providing a vital service to the sports teams at both the Platteville and Cuba City High Schools.

Abby Thibadeau and Julie Grabandt have been key partners of the school’s teams and are familiar faces to their fans. The assigned athletic trainer attends practice sessions and home games for football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, wrestling, track & field in addition to baseball and softball for both Cuba City & Platteville. In their role as Certified Athletic Trainers, they evaluate, advise and treat these athletes to assist them in recovering from and preventing injuries.

According to Scott Statz, Platteville High School’s Football Coach, the service that these athletic trainers provide is invaluable. “Abby’s real honest with the kids. There’s a difference between a kid having a minor injury and one who has an injury serious enough to keep him or her out of the game. The student athlete and I don’t necessarily know the difference but she does...and we trust her judgment 100%.”

Prior to January 2005, these athletic training services were provided by an area medical clinic but a re-organization led to their discontinuation of that service. Both Cuba City and Platteville High Schools appealed to Southwest Health Center to fill the gap. Southwest Health Center provides these training services at no charge and the schools pick up the related cost of supplies and equipment.

Recognized by the American Medical Association as allied health professionals, athletic trainers specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries. They also may be involved in the rehabilitation and reconditioning of injuries. They help prevent injuries by advising athletes on the proper use of equipment and applying protective or injury-preventive devices such as tape, bandages, and braces. Injury prevention often includes educating people on what they should do to minimize their risk for injuries.

Southwest Health Center’s athletic trainers work under the supervision of Dr. Kevin Carr, a local Dean Care physician, and in cooperation with other local health care providers. For athletes, athletic trainers also provide a vital communication link between the injured athlete, the physician, the coach, and sometimes the athlete’s family, to determine when it’s right to return to practice and play.

Providing these athletic training services is a true example of a community partnership. It is just one of the many ways in which Southwest Health Center supports the health of our communities. The program has had a positive influence on hundreds of student-athletes in our communities. “Our involvement and support of the athletic training at our local schools is a vital step toward promoting good health to our young community members. We see this program as a wise investment in the future health and wellness of our young people,” said Anne Klawiter, President and CEO.
Laura and Gloria have been friends and neighbors for many years. One of the activities they enjoy together is the Diabetes Support Group at Spooner Health System. The friends have been attending the Diabetes Support Group for over 2 years.

The Diabetes Support Group meets once a month and is free to the community. Claudia Hagen, Spooner Health System Education Coordinator, presents information and organizes speakers for the group. Gloria credits the Diabetes Support Group with helping her to manage her diabetes through diet. She feels that without the group she would have become insulin dependant sooner.

The friends recall when Claudia Hagen arranged for a presentation on diabetic comfort shoes. After the presentation, attendees could order specially fitted shoes. Laura and Gloria also take advantage of the Free Foot Care Clinic offered by Spooner Health System’s Home Health Department. The clinic is offered every week by appointment.

From nutrition information to foot care, Spooner Health System provides services that are important to diabetics. The friends say, “even with the price of gas, we make it a priority to attend the Diabetes Support Group and the Foot Care Clinic.”
Spooner Health System, Spooner

*Health fair*

It was scheduled to start at 9 a.m. That didn’t make any difference to the dozens milling around the lobby at Spooner Health System on Saturday morning, August 4, 2007. Today was Spooner Health System’s Health Fair and they were lining up for health screenings. Over 350 Burnett and Washburn County residents took advantage of the free screenings offered during the morning; free blood pressure checks, cholesterol screening, blood sugar testing, pulmonary function testing and more…continuous education offered from professionals: nurses, physical and respiratory therapists, dietician, social workers and others.

The need to know about their health is prominent in the minds of many as we saw what took place that Saturday morning. The crowd was great and varied, from Medicare-age recipients to the honest hard-working families that may fall into the growing group…“the working poor” who have no health insurance.

It was a good day. No, it was a great day to be in health care. Giving feels good.
As I read the October-December 2006 “Mission Possible” booklet, I thought it might be helpful if I shared what the St. Clare mission has meant to me so that those who work for St. Clare can see it from the receiver’s viewpoint.

I know firsthand about the St. Clare mission because I received Community Care for the first time in my life during this past year. As a person who has paid for health insurance for 37 years, I found myself without health insurance six months after losing my job in 2004. A dull throbbing in my right side caused me to seek medical assistance at a regional clinic last February. A $400 bill for blood work was paid out of pocket. I was told I needed a cat-scan and a colonoscopy before treatment could begin. The estimated cost was $6,000. I had been able to pay some of the smaller bills but that bill represented close to a third of my income. In spite of being a substitute teacher, working outdoors scraping and painting windows for $5 per hour, and teaching stress reduction classes, my income remains at the poverty level.

So when I learned I could apply to St. Clare Hospital for assistance, I did. I was made to feel okay about it. I was told that I had paid for health insurance for 37, and Patient Assistance was a program intended to help people like me. I was grateful to the people that were so kind and sensitive with me every step of the way through the application process. Adrian, as supervisor, always talked to me with much compassion and kindness.

In a society where I feel invisible, St. Clare Hospital was there when I needed medical help. It represents everything that I believe to be true concerning service for others.

I tell everyone how grateful and thankful I am for St. Clare Hospital and want St. Clare employees to know that you HAVE made a difference in my life! May each person that works there be blessed!”

Carol Bezin
"Because my wife has diabetes and colitis, she needs nearly constant medical care. We lost our insurance in Michigan, as the new insurance provider for my company would not cover us due to Judy’s high risk, so we went for a year without insurance. Finally, we were able to get coverage through Blue Cross-Blue Shield. Three months before my retirement, after working 17 years, I was let go at the age of 61. I was too young for Medicare and we had lost everything so filed bankruptcy. When we moved to this area, we went to Unity Clinic to see how we could get help. There we met Dr. Armstrong, who was wonderful, and she began to help us find medical care.

It’s been absolutely astonishing how the people at St. Croix Regional Medical Center helped us. Dr. Michele Armstrong at the Unity Clinic took Judy under her wing and began to make arrangements for help through the Patient Advocate Program and Chronic Care Clinic. So we came to St. Croix Falls, met with Brenda and Dawn for help with medication access. They walked us through the application steps and helped us to file the necessary papers to get medical aid. As a result, I now volunteer in the maintenance department and work as a valet. It’s my little way of giving back—like the barter system.

The leadership at this facility is exceptional. How they feel about people in our community and the need for health care for all is very impressive. It’s embarrassing to need this assistance after working and paying for benefits, but we never were made to feel undeserving or discounted at St. Croix. They are a blessing!"

Ty and Judy Spencer of Balsam Lake, Wisconsin
St. Croix Regional Medical Center, St. Croix Falls

SCRMC joins the Foundation and other groups supporting students who plan to study in health care by presenting $20,000 in scholarships to area grads

“I was so thrilled to receive the Foundation award,” said Shannon Loberger. “I plan to use the money for books in the fall when I attend Winona State University where I will study nursing.” The Foundation presents six $500 awards per year to high school seniors and students already in school who are pursuing careers in healthcare fields.

St. Croix Regional Medical Center also now provides twenty $1,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors from fourteen schools (including the Home School Association) in the Medical Center’s Minnesota and Wisconsin service area. Each school involved awards the scholarships through its own selection process. To be eligible, the high school senior has to be planning to enter a health care profession, preferably one involving direct patient care.

“This money became available thanks to the work of our Chief Financial Officer, John Tremble, through a health care scholarship grant he recently wrote,” explained Sandy Williams, SCRMC Director of Development, Marketing, and Education. “The money in the grant was contributed by US Bank, Cardinal Health, and Blue Cross Wisconsin.”

Guidance counselors in participating schools were notified of this scholarship fund immediately after the Medical Center learned that it had received the grant money in mid April. The scholarships were awarded by the schools at their Awards Nights or Graduation Ceremonies. “Students were notified by letter that they had been awarded a scholarship,” said Williams.

This new scholarship program joins an already existing scholarship award program sponsored by the SCRMC Auxiliary, the St. Croix Valley Health Care Foundation, and the River Valley Medical Group. The auxiliary awards 7-10 scholarships annually to graduating high school seniors, based on gifts and investments. The River Valley Medical Group awards a $1000 scholarship each spring.
As a Certified Occupational Therapist, Cory Frederick often works with patients that don’t have the means to purchase medical equipment when they need it. Many times patients don’t see the need coming and don’t have time to prepare for circumstances where they need the assistance of medical equipment.

This is why St. Joseph’s Auxiliary and St. Joseph’s Rehab Department have teamed up to sponsor the “Loan Closet Program.” The program was established in 2000 with the purpose of providing low cost and/or free reconditioned durable used medical equipment to people in St. Joseph’s Community Health Services’ market area.

St. Joseph’s Auxiliary provides limited funds to allow the purchase of used durable medical equipment on garage sales, auctions, etc. and to repair the equipment. Many items are simply donated to the Loan Closet from previous patients or families that no longer need them. All donated equipment is cleaned and repaired as needed by St. Joseph’s Rehab Department before it is issued to a new patient. The Masonic Lodge of Hillsboro graciously provides storage of all equipment for the Loan Closet Program.

St. Joseph’s Rehab Department offers the Loan Closet service as a benefit to our community. The need was there and they found a way to fill the need. The Loan Closet Program benefits those who can’t afford to purchase durable medical equipment on their own.

As a sample of the different types of medical equipment that are used, during a three month period, the following items were issued: two manual hospital beds, one tub seat, two commodes, one bed transfer handle, one wheelchair, and two roller walkers. Free will donations are accepted from patients whom receive the medical equipment from the Loan Closet.

The Loan Closet accepts any new or used durable medical equipment as well as cash donations to purchase minor parts to repair the used equipment as needed. For more information or to make a donation to the Loan Closet, please contact Cory Frederick, Occupational Therapist - St. Joseph’s Rehab Services Department by calling 608-489-8260.
St. Joseph’s Hospital, Chippewa Falls

*Free community education programs on alcohol and drug-related topics*

Experts in the treatment of alcohol and drug abuse remain steadfast in their assessment that education, awareness and community involvement are all factors that can lead to a decline in the incidence of chemical dependency. The more people know, the more the disease can be controlled.

Armed with that acknowledgement, the L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center of St. Joseph’s Hospital, Chippewa Falls, continues to offer free community education programs on alcohol and drug-related topics. The monthly programs have been offered for nearly five years, are free of charge and are designed for both the general public and professionals. Professionals may apply for continuing education credits.

A myriad of treatment professionals from the region present the monthly programs and numerous treatment center staff have also been presenters.

Topics have been many; some include grief and addiction, rage and addiction, holiday stress, criminal activity and dependency, music therapy’s role in treatment and many others.

Held onsite at the L.E. Phillips-Libertas Treatment Center, attendance has steadily grown and fluctuates depending on subject matter. Attendees are a mix of professionals and the general public.

The free, monthly programs are a beneficial resource for education about the disease of alcohol and drug abuse. The benefits are shared with the general public and with professionals who serve others.
St. Joseph’s Hospital, Chippewa Falls  
*Affordable dental care—a collaborative effort*

Affordable and accessible oral health care for the elderly and low-income families in Northwest Wisconsin has just been improved thanks in part to efforts of St. Joseph’s Hospital and Chippewa Falls 2010, a health community initiative sponsored by St. Joseph’s Hospital, in bringing a new state-of-the-art dental facility to Chippewa Falls. The new Marshfield Clinic Chippewa Dental Center is now open, serving the thousands of people on a waiting list for affordable dental care.

St. Joseph’s Hospital became involved in the effort six years ago when reports of emergency department visits for oral health care increased.

“People were coming to the emergency department of the hospital to relieve severe tooth pain, blatantly showing us an unmet need in our community,” says Rhonda Brown, healthy communities specialist at St. Joseph’s Hospital and coordinator of Chippewa Falls 2010: Achieving a Healthier Community. “We soon discovered thousands of people were on a waiting list for affordable dental care in our community.”

Lead by Ray Myers, assistant administrator at St. Joseph’s Hospital and Chippewa Falls 2010, the Oral Health Community Initiatives of Chippewa County was created to explore multiple options to improve access. In the meantime, St. Joseph’s Hospital assisted a rural health dental clinic by providing expanded space and renovations in the former Convent.

Several grants and collaborations paved the way to bring a federally qualified dental center to Chippewa Falls. Myers and Brown helped form the Chippewa County Dental Foundation, Inc., a non-profit foundation, which was able to secure funds to build a state-of-the-art dental facility, which has ten operatories and space for several dental specialists. Marshfield Clinic Health Center partnered with the group to bring the dentists, oral surgeons, staff and services to the center.

The Chippewa County Dental Foundation, Inc. continues its work towards awareness, education and prevention of oral health issues. For more information on the Foundation, contact Rhonda Brown at 715-726-3647.
St. Joseph’s Hospital, Chippewa Falls

Annual Live and Laugh Tonight for women

St. Joseph’s Hospital offers a free event to women as an evening to connect with their friends, laugh about life and at the same time learn about the health care services available to them. The format isn’t unique—hotel conference room, nationally known motivational speaker, cheesecake—however, the event continues to supersede capacity even in its seventh year, held during the dog days of summer.

“We are all aware that for the majority of women, the responsibilities of family, work and personal time can be overwhelming and stressful,” says Michele Paquette, marketing specialist and coordinator of the annual event. “We also know that women are always looking for a way to escape and have fun with their friends—if only for a few hours—but at the same time learn some valuable information about how to manage their stress and be aware of local resources.” The speaker is cued to ensure there is humor, but also specific take-away techniques to help with stress management and self motivation. A hallway of booths showcase hospital services staffed by specialists to answer questions if needed.

As in past years, over 400 attended the event, with another 100 being turned away. “I’m still amazed that the interest is still as huge as it was the first year we kicked it off, even after we moved the event to summer, which is typically a slower time of year for events.” There are several stories of how sisters, mothers/daughters and good friends strategize to better their chances for the random-drawing reservations.

The event is free of charge, however, for the past few years a free-will donation to the area food pantry was collected. “The pantry is so appreciative of this collection at this time of year, when there isn’t any other food drive planned,” adds Paquette. “Our participants are very generous to the cause, and our hospital has so much pride in being able to serve our community in this way.”
St. Mary’s Hospital, Madison

*Be Smart, Don’t Start*

St. Mary’s Hospital urges middle-schoolers to Be Smart, Don’t Start with tobacco through a curriculum about its effects on health. A nurse and respiratory therapist travel to 18 public and private schools in and around Dane County, logging nearly 600 staff hours to educate more than 4,000 children each year.
In just 24 hours, Rose Otis’s life changed completely. The time span started with a cheerful end-of-day recounting of her husband’s construction business and ended with a medical emergency that took his life.

“I was in a state of shock for months,” says Otis, whose husband, James Otis, died last Dec. 30 at age 52. The enormity of losing the love of her life was, by itself, crushing, yet she faced the demands of her husband’s business, a mortgage she could no longer afford, the hospital bills totaling more than $100,000, her husband’s burial expenses and her own subsequent care for clinical depression.

“I was lucky to have an advocate who knew this was not something I could handle on my own,” she says of her friend, Kris Baird, who helped her through that difficult time. The two gathered financial records and met with Carl Dodd, a St. Mary’s Hospital charity care program representative, who promptly agreed to write off the entire medical bill.

“We will provide exceptional health care to everyone in need, regardless of their ability to pay,” says President Frank Byrne, MD. “We give discounts to all uninsured patients, and in this case, it was 100 percent. Our policy also considers catastrophic medical costs that could not reasonably be paid in four years, considering their circumstances. Rose, who makes a low wage providing home care to the elderly, easily qualifies.”

The Otises had recently become uninsured because Jim’s business had downsized, no longer qualifying for less expensive group coverage. Individual coverage proved cost-prohibitive because the couple was over 50 and both were smokers. The lack of coverage didn’t bother them, though, because they thought they were in nearly perfect health.

Turns out Jim had a large aortic aneurysm, a dangerous bulge in the body’s largest blood vessel. Just before he underwent heart surgery, he told his wife, “It’s gonna be OK. The surgeon’s got good karma. And if something happens, I’m ready to go.”

“In hindsight, these words were gifts,” Otis says, adding that the relief from debt was also part of her healing process. “If they had not forgiven the bills, I might not even be here, I was so unstable,” she explains. “I have a lot to be grateful for.”
St. Mary’s Hospital, Madison

Patient & Family Emergency Fund: A heart in good hands

St. Mary’s knows that “home is where the heart is,” no matter how long a person lives elsewhere. That’s why it was important for the staff to help an elderly patient secure ongoing care near her son who lives two states away. After lengthy hospitalizations at St. Mary’s, it was determined that the woman would never be able to live on her own again. Her son, married with three children, was unable to uproot his family and needed help bringing his mother to Indiana. So St. Mary’s arranged for a nursing home bed and a primary physician there, in addition to ambulance transport. The Patient & Family Emergency Fund paid the amount for the ambulance that the woman’s family could not cover. In 2006, St. Mary’s dedicated more than $15,000 to this program.
Without warning, Mary Horne’s life was turned upside down. A stroke paralyzed her right side, affecting her ability to write, drive, and even hold the phone. One of the great joys in her life was gardening, and the stroke took that away too. As a retired teacher who relocated to Wisconsin, her insurance wouldn’t cover many of the treatments, totaling thousands of dollars, claiming they were out of the network plan. That’s when she contacted GoldenCare, a free membership organization that offers expert health information, social activities and health care claims assistance to anyone 60 or older. Her advisor, Julie Meyer, was able to negotiate fair discounts and charity write-offs and provide much-needed emotional support. Today, Mary is nearly recovered, has paid off her debt and offers her services to others in need.
As a retired pastor and psychotherapist, Rene McShane understands a bit about the human family. Sometimes, its members need help. This time, he is on the receiving end, getting free medication from the Dean & St. Mary’s Neighborhood Asthma Clinic. A lifelong asthmatic, his condition worsened when he took up smoking as a response to stress. “I got lucky when I learned about the clinic,” says McShane, who is without insurance to help pay for costly medications. “The meds put me in remission, and the staff made it possible for me to quit smoking—something my 9-year-old grandson was worried about. To me, it’s obvious Dean & St. Mary’s care about people, and not just money.”
I Was So Scared And Had Nowhere To Go

“I knew something was wrong and I was so scared. I had nowhere to go. I cannot get health insurance because of my health problems so I don’t go to the doctor until my health gets terrible for me. I finally had to go to the doctor; he knew I needed some tests for an ovarian cyst and fibroid tumor. I am disabled and am raising five children so there was no money for these tests. I am also diabetic and I go without insulin sometimes because I cannot afford it. My doctor reassured me, ‘Don’t you worry, we’ll figure it out.’ He called all over to find care for me; one hospital wanted $2,000 up front and I could not afford it. He finally called St Mary’s and then called me back cheering, “We found a place – you can go to St Mary’s!” I was so scared that I had something really wrong and I was treated so nice. It happens sometimes, that when you can’t pay you get treated poorly, but when I came to St. Mary’s they didn’t care that I didn’t have the money—they only cared about me. The lady doing the CT scan was so kind, so nice. I appreciate how I was treated and it was such a relief to find a place that would take me.”

Expressions of thanks and gratitude

“I want to thank you very much for your help with my account to be approved for the Community Care Program. When I received the letter from St. Mary’s waving the balance, I cried happy, relieved tears. I never in my life thought I’d be in the position I’m in at my age, but I know there are many others like me. You took a huge weight off my shoulders and made my day and more. Thank you so much again.”

“To all at St. Mary’s: I graciously thank you, everyone, for the wonderful care you gave during and after my stay at your outstanding facility. I never expected to be treated that well anywhere. Everyone I met made me feel at home and completely welcome. And a very special thank you to the Community Care Committee that was able to see the dilemma my husband and I are in. There are just no words to say how grateful we are. Again, thank you.”

“Received your letter and statement “Paid in Full” with heart-felt gratitude. I am at a loss of words to express how I feel at this time! Thanks to St. Mary’s, I can plan and think about my future.”

Stories from “A Woman’s Place” at St. Mary’s Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay

“Anna, a young woman who stopped by A Woman’s Place just for some information about pregnancy, had never seen a doctor before. Our counselor suggested she go over to get checked at our partner clinic and, to everyone’s surprise, she was admitted the same day. Her baby was delivered a few hours later.”

“Juanita, who spoke no English, told of having to be accompanied by her 10-year-old son when she made pre-natal visits to the doctor—her son had the uncomfortable job of translating her symptoms for her. Now she meets with our Hispanic Health Educator who helps her navigate her health care.”
St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay

Colombian family realizes their dream

When Jose Antonio Escandell and his wife, Luceth Rincon, led their three daughters up the steps of San Damiano House in Green Bay, it was the start of a new life for the family that had just emigrated to the U.S. from Cali, Colombia, to Green Bay.

Just up the street, St. Vincent Hospital towered above them, a bastion of hope and possibility. That was last year.

This year, the Escandells have moved out of San Damiano House, the cozy home that St. Vincent has offered rent free to immigrant families for the past 3 ½ years while they resettle in Green Bay. Their respite helped the Escandell adults find jobs and their children, Luceth, 11, Sthephany, 7, and Katherine, 3, get settled into school and daycare in their new community.

Today, after that early help from St. Vincent, the family is making a new home for themselves quite literally at 326 S. Jackson St. in Green Bay. It’s a recently completed Habitat for Humanity home that has been constructed with the help of community and business volunteers, including volunteers from St. Vincent. The Escandell family has also worked on the house themselves, and Jose Antonio and Luceth are committed to donating 500 hours of work on Habitat homes before they can take over ownership.

Back at San Damiano House, a new family has already filled the suddenly silent space on Porlier Street. San Damiano House was named after the place near Assisi, Italy, that became central to the life of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of the Hospital Sisters who sponsor St. Vincent Hospital.

A couple from Ethiopia and their three children, looking for a new life just like the Escandells before them, are settling into the house on Porlier and making do with donated furnishings.

That new family, like the Escandells, has language skills to learn, money matters to overcome and education to overcome in a place that is totally foreign to them.

The Escandells, who enjoyed their newfound freedom in Green Bay, called the city “paradise.” “It’s a big city but people live like it’s a little city,” Jose Antonio said in an interview last year. “All the people smile. All people have problems, but they don’t reflect their problems. All the time they smile.”
Stoughton Hospital, Stoughton

Collaborative ‘After the Tornado‘ program provided support & information

When Audrey Hermanson recalls the catastrophic events which occurred on August 18, 2005 in Stoughton, WI, she is reminded of the first thing her husband Dave did in years past whenever their family moved into a new house: he would show the kids the safest place to gather when the tornado siren sounded.

The Hermansons’ three children are all grown now with families of their own. So when the massive tornado tore through north of Stoughton, Dave just had to direct Audrey to the basement bathroom—the only space, as it turned out, sheltered enough to withstand the storm that ripped their home apart nail by screeching nail.

The couple and dozens of other families whose homes were destroyed or damaged by the tornado found support and comfort in their extended families, friends and community. Another source of information and support were the “After the Tornado: A Time to Share” programs developed by the Mental Health/Outreach Workgroup of the Stoughton Area Long-Term Recovery Board.

The Stoughton area was denied FEMA assistance—the tornado ripped through their community less than two weeks before Hurricane Katrina hit. “Early on, we were hearing from people that they needed a reliable source of information about the recovery process and an opportunity to share their perspectives,” says Mark Hale, who chaired the workgroup, which was a collaborative effort of Stoughton Hospital, the Stoughton Area School District and the Long-Term Recovery Board.

The workgroup formed after the hospital sponsored an initial education event for tornado survivors in November 2005 on “Managing Stress and Finding Hope.” Participants were appreciative of the information provided by the hospital’s psychiatrist, Dr. Kenneth Robbins, and the chance to share their experiences with people in similar situations, says Linda Schaefer, Stoughton Hospital’s Outreach and Community Education Coordinator who served as the hospital representative with the workgroup.

The families also suggested topics for future sessions, which covered issues from post-tornado income tax preparation to landscaping and replacing lost trees. “Some of these residents lost dozens, even hundreds, of trees,” Schaefer notes. “It will take decades to replace those beautiful settings.”

Audrey Hermanson says she and her husband found the Time to Share gatherings to be useful and comforting, especially a meeting in March of 2006 with residents from Siren, Wis., who rebuilt their community after a tornado five years ago.

“After hearing them talk, you realize you will recover, and life will eventually get back to normal,” she says. “It’s really good to be able to get together with other people and talk about what you’re going through.”

Another spring program featured information from the National Weather Service about storm safety, storm spotting and the potential for stressful reactions when tornado season swings into full gear again.

“This was a community effort and a response to a community problem—it didn’t just affect the people whose homes were damaged or destroyed,” Hale says. “The responses we’ve heard from people underscores the importance of joining together and supporting each other. It’s not always easy to just buck up and move on.”
SynergyHealth St. Joseph’s Hospital, West Bend

One man’s vision led hospital to build first residential Hospice in Washington County

For Ron Komas, The Kathy Hospice began as a dream and a promise in memory of the love of his life. For over 200 families, The Kathy Hospice has become a place of peace and comfort for their loved ones facing the end of life.

The Kathy Hospice opened in February 2006 on the 143-acre campus of SynergyHealth St. Joseph’s Hospital south of West Bend. The hospice is owned by the SynergyHealth Foundation and operated by the hospital. Prior to construction of the hospice, Washington County had no freestanding residential hospice facility. Now, The Kathy Hospice offers the option of a homelike hospice close to home, with eight private rooms, round-the-clock nursing and pain control for patients, and compassionate support for families.

Ron’s wife Kathy was a mother, teacher, artist, and Ron’s best friend since their youth. When Kathy’s cancer returned in 2001 after a five-year respite, and her symptoms became severe, Ron was unable to give her the care she needed at home. He searched for but couldn’t find a residential hospice near their home in Washington County.

After Kathy died in 2002 at the age of 56, Ron wanted to do something positive to help other families. He took his vision for a residential hospice to St. Joseph’s, which was planning to build a new hospital.

The story of Kathy’s struggle and Ron’s vision struck a chord with hospital leaders and physicians, and spread to the entire community. The campaign to raise over $1.5 million for the hospice captured the hearts of many who saw their own experiences mirrored in Ron’s story.

“So many people said they had gone through a similar tragedy and didn’t know what to do,” said Ron, who devotes his time as a volunteer at the hospice, board member, and champion for fundraising efforts.

By July 2007, The Kathy Hospice served more than 200 terminally ill patients. Income does not meet expenses for the non-profit hospice, yet it has remained true to its mission of never having to turn anyone away because of inability to pay.

Families and community groups continue to support the hospice through the SynergyHealth Foundation with memorials, donations, and fundraisers. Dozens of volunteers have helped maintain the grounds, and local nurseries provided plants and trees.

Anne Wickland, a beloved and unforgettable teacher who taught Spanish at West Bend West High School for 21 years, battled cancer for eight years before her death on March 29, 2007.

Al found at The Kathy Hospice a comforting non-clinical atmosphere and dedicated staff.

“They have not only the nursing skills, but training for hospice care,” Al said. “They can tell how a person is doing by just looking at them and touching them. They know the correct action to take, whether to periodical changes of position for the patient. They also have training to help families, and know how to answer their questions properly.”
He has seen first-hand what the hospice means to people. He remembers the way a nurse who had lost her spouse comforted him and helped him understand what he was going through. He appreciated the large patient rooms that allowed family members to visit Anne and share a meal. He saw how much it meant for a woman in her 70s to be able to drive to the hospice to visit a loved one.

Al was so touched by the caring work of the hospice, like Ron Komas he is now a trained hospice volunteer, coming to The Kathy Hospice Mondays after work to help with serving meals or engage in conversation with patients and families.

“If I didn’t believe in the hospice, I wouldn’t be volunteering there,” he said.
ThedaCare (Appleton Medical Center, Theda Clark Medical Center, New London Family Medical Center, Riverside Medical Center)

**ThedaCare community programs**

ThedaCare’s mission, and therefore the mission of its hospitals – Appleton Medical Center, Theda Clark Medical Center, New London Family Medical Center and Riverside Medical Center – is to improve the health of the communities it serves.

While we focus on outstanding clinical performance in all of the services we provide, most studies suggest that 90% of all things that influence the health status of our patients are outside the realm of health care, including socioeconomic factors and education (20%), lifestyle (50%), and genetics (20%).

Increasingly, an emerging socioeconomic factor influencing health status is cost of care to both individuals and businesses. There is growing evidence that the rising cost of care may be restricting access or causing people to defer needed care.

This is why we have focused out health improvement efforts in the following areas:

- Collaboration with the community on creative projects and initiatives in the other areas that affect health status
- Sponsorship of community programs and activities that have a positive influence on health status
- Presentation of hundreds of community programs ranging from specific medical information to those that serve to improve health status by improving our community
- Promoting employee volunteerism and connecting employees with volunteer opportunities
- An increasing emphasis on addressing the affordability issues of today’s health care, including helping businesses and individuals employ strategies to better afford care

**Collaboration - CHAT:**
Since 2001, ThedaCare has been the catalyst behind the Community Health Action Team (CHAT). The program is funded by dedicating 5% of ThedaCare’s net revenue above budgeted net revenue to this purpose, following an initial $500,000 endowment. Recently, ThedaCare created a dedicated “Chat” fund within the Community Foundation of the Fox Cities. The initial contribution was $1.8 million, with an ongoing commitment to contribute 5% of excess net revenue on an annual basis.

In addition to funding, ThedaCare also provides staffing to convene and facilitate community “plunges”, and resulting programs as well as communication within the community.

Over the last six years, CHAT has sponsored daylong community “plunges” during which community leaders and ordinary citizens immerse themselves in a specific concern. Topics tackled to date include affordable housing, senior health care, mental illness, rural health, alcohol abuse, diversity, childhood obesity, literacy and poverty.

**Resulting initiatives include:**
- Financial Literacy course as mandatory school curriculum
- Senior Transportation Coordination – “Making the Ride Happen” program
- Shawano County Rural Health Initiative
- Bridges Healthy Cooking School
The major effort of CHAT in 2006 sought to attack the problem of illiteracy. One in 20 of the 1 million Wisconsin residents who qualify for adult literacy and English language classes are receiving services. In the Fox Cities, less than 300 of the nearly 20,000 people who need literacy services are receiving them.

Litwork! is a community literacy effort that came together as a result of a CHAT sponsored community plunge. In coordination with the Fox Valley Literacy Council (FVLC), the effort brings together 15 church congregations to support literacy efforts by providing tutors, classrooms, and monetary support.

With $35,000 in start-up funds from CHAT, the FVLC hired a part-time coordinator to organize and recruit volunteer tutors and to coordinate the literacy efforts of these churches. To date, the effort has recruited more than 40 volunteers and matched 37 of them to individual students for tutoring. An additional 27 students are participating in English as a second language classes and English conversation groups led by these volunteers.

In 2007, ThedaCare, through CHAT, along with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and the Appleton Library Foundation, launched a community-wide anti-poverty effort called Project Promise.

**Sponsorships:**
Through its entities, ThedaCare provided more than $100,000 in direct monetary support, and more than $50,000 in in-kind support to community organizations and events in 2006 to support programs and activities to improve the health of the communities we serve.

**Community Presentations:**
ThedaCare and its entities provide organizational and staffing support for hundreds of community programs, health presentations and health-related support groups each year.

**Volunteerism:**
For the last four years, ThedaCare has operated the “Helping Hearts” program to promote employee volunteerism and to connect employees with volunteer opportunities. In addition to encouraging and supporting these volunteer efforts, ThedaCare also provides cash awards in the name of individual employees to the organizations for which they volunteer.

In 2006, 778 ThedaCare employees donated more than 65,000 hours of volunteer time to nearly 600 community organizations. This amounted to nearly $1.2 million in volunteer labor – or the equivalent of nearly 40 ThedaCare employees working full-time on behalf of community organizations.

The program was supported by approximately $100,000 in staff support and $40,000 in contributions to individual organizations in the name of employee volunteers.

**Access & Cost of Care**
The cost of care is becoming a growing barrier to timely access, and studies suggest it may now be contributing to a decline in health status. In response, ThedaCare has employed a number of strategies to benefit the community.

- Significant staffing and monetary support to the Fox Cities Community Health Center, which provides health care to low and moderate income individuals and families who have little or no insurance.
• Nearly $4 million in charity care in 2006
• Significant discounts to uninsured patients who pay for care “out-of-pocket”
• Organizational support for the development and ongoing efforts of the Wisconsin Collaborative for HealthCare Quality, the Wisconsin Health Information Organization, and other efforts to create better outcomes at a lower cost by promoting transparency and public reporting of health care outcomes and costs
• Educational efforts to promote value-based purchasing as a way to combat higher costs. In 2006, these efforts included supporting the development of a new value-based purchasing curriculum at the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh School of Business
• ThedaCare also hosted Harvard School of Business Professor Michael Porter at two half-day seminars in Appleton and Milwaukee. More than 400 Wisconsin business and government leaders heard from Dr. Porter and other experts as to how they may provide better access to care and reduce health care costs by purchasing coverage based on value. A case-study curriculum is now under development at the Harvard School of Business based on these half-day seminars.
ThedaCare

*ThedaCare Physicians Raise $10,000 for Anatomy Class; Class promotes health care careers, early college credit for Shawano students*

Thanks to ThedaCare Physicians–Shawano, students at Shawano Community High School will soon have the opportunity to enroll in a dual-credit anatomy and physiology class, earning both high school and college credits. ThedaCare Physicians presented a check for $10,000 to help fund the new class at the April 2, 2007 meeting of the Shawano-Gresham Board of Education.

In 2006, Mr. Todd Stiede, principal of Shawano Community High School, and Mr. Rex Wachtel, a guidance counselor at the school, began to explore a way to help the many students who find themselves on waiting lists to get into college nursing programs. They approached Dr. Richard Hess, superintendent of the Shawano-Gresham School District, and the high school’s anatomy and physiology teacher, Angela Kowalewski, with an idea that would allow high school students to earn college credits.

“We had noticed that a lot of students come back to the Shawano area after college to work as nurses and CNAs (certified nursing assistants),” Kowalewski said. “As we learned about their experiences, we found out that many of them were frustrated by long waiting periods to enter nursing programs. Having college credits under their belts when they graduate from high school would help them get a boost on the credits they need, and hopefully allow them to get into nursing programs more quickly.”

The group’s idea of offering a dual credit class, however, would cost the school district almost $27,000 – more than was in the budget. Dr. Hess approached Kathy Qualheim, MD, of ThedaCare Physicians–Shawano, about helping launch the class. She responded by enlisting the help of her fellow ThedaCare physicians, including retired cardiologist Dr. John Mielke. Together, they raised $5,000 to help purchase the materials required to start the class. ThedaCare’s corporate office matched the gift.

“We are very grateful to ThedaCare,” said Dr. Hess. “Dr. Qualheim really stepped forward. She’s always been a great friend of our school district. Without help from her and all the other physicians at ThedaCare, this class would never have happened. It’s a plus for our community and a plus for our students and their futures.”

Since many students enroll in nursing classes at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC), Kowalewski sought college-level status for the class there. Students who complete the high school class with a C grade or better will automatically receive college credit at NWTC. Those credits will transfer to other colleges and technical schools, including schools in the University of Wisconsin system and private universities.

In order to teach the class at the college level, Kowalewski had to earn adjunct professor status at NWTC, which she did last summer. She completed additional studies, and also took NWTC’s anatomy and physiology class.

“It was important to see how the class is actually taught,” she said.

Dr. Qualheim, along with Dr. Mielke, organized an action plan to help the school raise money and called on fellow physicians in ThedaCare’s Shawano office to contribute. They also helped Kowalewski campaign for donations from other local organizations and individuals.
“This is our community, and these are our kids,” said Dr. Qualheim. “The more young people we can interest in healthcare careers, the better for the future of care in our area.”

In addition to the ThedaCare contribution and the funds budgeted by the school district, grant applications are in process. The start-up funds will be used to purchase specimens and models of body parts.

The high school will offer a trial run of the new class this fall for about 15 students. Although nearly 150 students take anatomy and physiology classes each year at the high school, the dual-credit class will strive for a small student-to-teacher ratio.

Dr. Qualheim has volunteered to present during some class periods next year, as have Tod Lewis, MD, and Michael Williams, MD, also of ThedaCare Physicians–Shawano. Kowalewski hopes to draw on the expertise of other physicians as the class develops.

ThedaCare Physicians–Shawano is the largest multi-specialty physician practice in the region. It began as a physician practice more than 40 years ago, and has been affiliated with ThedaCare for almost 15 years. It employs nearly 170 people, including 17 physicians, at locations in Shawano, Clintonville and Tigerton. More than 20,000 active patients in ten counties make more than 80,000 visits to ThedaCare Physicians–Shawano annually.

ThedaCare™ (www.thedacare.org) is a community health system consisting of Appleton Medical Center, Theda Clark Medical Center, New London Family Medical Center, Riverside Medical Center in Waupaca, ThedaCare Physicians, Ingenuity First, and other health care services. ThedaCare is the largest employer in Northeast Wisconsin with nearly 5,300 employees.

For more information, media may contact Megan Wilcox (megan.wilcox@thedacare.org), public relations specialist for ThedaCare, at (920) 830-5847, or John Gillespie (john.gillespie@thedacare.org), manager of ThedaCare public and government relations, at (920) 830-5846.
Theda Clark Medical Center, Neenah

Area Students “P.A.R.T.Y. @ The PAC” -- Theda Clark trauma center educational program to reach more teens

Jason Mayer and his seven friends did everything right. They arranged a driver to chauffeur them around for Travis Schisel’s bachelor party. However, despite their preparations, on their way home to the Manitowoc area from Appleton, their vehicle collided with a van driven by a drunken driver. All nine people were injured; four, including Mayer and Schisel, were taken to Theda Clark Medical Center.

Six months later, Jason still suffers from a bruised spinal cord and severe nerve damage. He walks with crutches and requires assistance for nearly every daily function, including getting out of bed.

“I used to be able to do anything,” said Jason, 28, an accountant from Whitelaw. “But now I cannot. It’s hard – I will not lie. I get frustrated and angry. But, I realize it doesn’t help to do that, and I try to work through it all the best I can.”

Jason shared his story at the third annual P.A.R.T.Y. at the P.A.C., April 19 and 20 at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center in Appleton. Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth, or P.A.R.T.Y., is a reality education program for students, allowing them to see and hear firsthand what can happen as a result of making poor choices. To date, the program, which is offered by the Trauma Center at Theda Clark and funded by the Theda Clark Medical Center Foundation, has been presented to more than 10,000 young people in Neenah, Menasha and surrounding communities.

On April 19 and 20, both the Theda Clark Medical Center and Appleton Medical Center Foundations sponsored a “super-sized” version of the P.A.R.T.Y. program at the Fox Cities P.A.C. Approximately 4,400 ninth-grade students from 22 area public and parochial schools attended one of the half-day events. High schools planning to attend include the Appleton Area School District, Brillion, Freedom, Hilbert, Kaukauna, Menasha, New London, Stockbridge, Valley New School, Wild Rose, Fox Valley Lutheran, Kimberly, Little Chute, Valley Christian High School, Hortonville, St. Mary’s High School, New Holstein, Ripon, Valders, Winneconne, Waupaca, and Shiocton. Nearly 6,000 students have attended P.A.R.T.Y. at the P.A.C. since 2005, when it began.

“All too often area motor vehicle crashes involving teens are a result of teenagers making poor decisions and engaging in risky behavior;” said Krystal Schneider, RN, coordinator of the P.A.R.T.Y. program. “If our efforts can prevent just one student from making a bad decision that results in a traumatic injury, we have done our job.”

P.A.R.T.Y. at the P.A.C will deliver a powerful message about the perils of risk-taking behavior, the consequences, and the importance of personal responsibility – while empowering young people to make informed, safe choices. The program includes a high-energy opening, a student skit, by the Kaukauna PRIDE group, presentations from trauma and neurosurgeons, and the personal stories from trauma and spinal cord injury survivors.

Jason Mayer wants the ninth graders to know that decisions they make can impact their lives or the lives of others. “They will be getting their drivers licenses soon and being influenced to drink alcohol,” he said. “They need to know they will be accountable for their actions because their actions could affect someone else, like me and my friends.”
Travis and his fiancé, Tiana Boetcher, finally married March 17, the seventh anniversary of the day they met. Everyone in the wedding party was still involved in the ceremony.

The greatest incidence of trauma injury and death occurs in the 15 to 24 year age groups. P.A.R.T.Y. was developed in 1986 in Canada to educate teens to the perils of risk-taking behavior and the tragic consequences that can occur, such as drinking and driving, noncompliance to seat belt legislation, and dangerous behaviors, like diving into shallow water.

The Trauma Center at Theda Clark began the first P.A.R.T.Y. program in the United States in September 1998.

In 2002, the Theda Clark P.A.R.T.Y. Program was presented with the 2002 Traffic Safety Advocate Award at the 28th Annual Governor’s Conference, which was sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Bureau of Transportation.

ThedaCare™ is a community-owned health system consisting of Appleton Medical Center, Theda Clark Medical Center, New London Family Medical Center, ThedaCare Physicians, Ingenuity First, and other health care services. ThedaCare is the largest employer in Northeast Wisconsin with 5,300 employees.
Tomah Memorial Hospital, Tomah
$TMH$ helps educate businesses about drugs

Nationwide, businesses lose $1-billion dollars a year due to drug use by employees. That’s why Tomah Police say it is critical for more business owners to be aware of drugs and the impact narcotics have on the workplace.

About a dozen Tomah business and industry representatives got a firsthand lesson on their role in the fight against drugs during a quarterly “Business and Industry” meeting coordinated by the Community Outreach Department of Tomah Memorial Hospital (TMH).

Tomah Police Department Sergeant Mark Nicholson said it’s beneficial for businesses to work with law enforcement in policing drugs.

“If they (businesses) are having issues with any employees that they feel that are possibly involved in drug use or abuse to contact us and work together with us, there are certain things that we can assist them with as well as they can assist us with,” Nicholson said. “Just the exchange of information of things that are going on is very lucrative to both sides.”

Nicholson presented a PowerPoint demonstration on various drugs, while displaying a number of drug paraphernalia confiscated by local authorities.

Even though Tomah business owners have been cooperative with local police, Nicholson said there’s not enough awareness on the subject because some businesses don’t want to be linked to drugs.

“The awareness to it may provide a bad, sour taste for some body,” he said. “Some may look at a certain business and say there are drug users going on at that location, and I think business owners may not that perception to be involved with their business,” Nicholson concluded.

Nicholson said it’s “extremely important” for police to work with business leaders to educate them on drug use occurring in Tomah.

“It shows that we are trying to be as proactive as possible by putting out into the community and businesses that we are wanting to stop the activity that’s going -- not only to arrest people, but to assist them from using drugs.”
Tomah Memorial Hospital, Tomah
Community Care assists in financial independence

Community Care made available through Tomah Memorial Hospital (TMH) provided a Wisconsin man the opportunity to take control of his life and reach financial independence.

In a recent letter to Tomah Memorial, the patient said he was “surprised” to learn that his hospital bill -- for treatment of asthma -- “qualified to be paid by a special fund set up by the hospital.”

At the time he was admitted, he did not have insurance. It was his goal to get out of debt from his small business and someday become a police officer. He also was to get married and start a family at the time of his hospitalization.

Today, the man is a full time police officer in a Wisconsin city, with a family, including three children.

The man felt it was the Community Care at Tomah Memorial Hospital that made an impact on his life. “I believe that the timing of that financial help from the hospital encouraged me toward the hope of financial independence,” he wrote in his letter. “I am so thankful a fund had been set up to help people that truly wanted to turn a corner and get rid of debt,” he wrote.

The man also contributed $1,000 to TMH saying, “it would make me very happy, if the situation arises, to help someone else as you have helped me.”
Sonja McLaughlin is thankful Hospice Touch of Tomah Memorial Hospital saved her and her family. The Adams County village of Arkdale teacher’s aide said she and her son were literally touched by an Angel after her husband lost a battle with cancer.

“We were devastated that no one could help us, but when Hospice came and when Valerie (Hospice Registered Nurse Valerie Kuehl) arrived at our door it was like an Angel was sent to us,” McLaughlin explained. “They always gave us hope and encouraged us to pray and deal with each day.”

Even though the program has never generated enough revenue to cover the direct expenses associated with running it, Tomah Memorial Hospital continues to support it as an important component of the continuum of care offered to patients.

“As a non-profit, it’s important for us to offer services because of community need, not because of the revenue they generate,” explained TMH Chief Financial Officer Joseph Zeps. “With an annual operating budget of around $1.4 million, Hospice Touch is one of the largest examples of this type at Tomah Memorial.”

Earlier this month, the hospital’s Board of Directors approved the establishment of a permanent endowment to provide donors with a mechanism to make a gift that will continue to benefit individuals, families and community by providing financial assistance to Hospice Touch and its programs.

“We established the program as a way to better reflect donor intent and allow for more planned giving in addition to the episodic giving that they enjoyed,” TMH Chief Executive Officer Phil Stuart said. “The program allows for planned giving and perpetuity for hospice and related programs.”

Hospice Touch provides end of life care through facilities in Tomah, Mauston and Adams-Friendship. The original program was formed in 1992. Annually it provides services to about 150 people, while touching the lives of hundreds each year.
Good nutrition goes hip-hop

When Julie Salomon, Clinical Nutritionist at University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics was asked to make a presentation to a second-grade class, she did what she always does: She donned her fruity blouse and hat, a la Carmen Miranda, and shared with the youngsters three important messages on nutrition. But it wasn’t until weeks later that she realized the messages she planted that day had taken root in the form of inspiration for the students.

Julie and the other nutritionists at UW Hospital and Clinic often take their message of nutritional wellness to community and school events and wellness fairs. At those events, and for this group of second-graders, Julie boils things down to three key directives:

- Colorize— the more colors you eat the better;
- Minimize — cut down on junk food, large portions, sweetened beverages, etc.; and
- Mobilize — exercise.

To reinforce this approach, she brought along some exotic ethnic fruits and vegetables to illustrate just how diverse fruits and vegetables can be.

A few weeks later, Julie was surprised to receive an invitation back to the class to pick up a gift. There, she was presented a new customized hat, featuring the students’ names with a corresponding fruit or vegetable. There was Gabe the gourd, and Jack the jalapeno. Julie was moved to tears, as she realized how her message had been embraced by these students and had fostered further discovery.

A few weeks later, Julie was invited back to the school again, this time for an end-of-year assembly. To her amazement, Julie and the rest of the school were treated to a full length, choreographed, hip-hop song, performed by the students with lyrics featuring her nutritional message of colorize, minimize and mobilize. What had begun as a class visit with a simple message grew into a fun example of just how easy healthy living can be for both kids and adults. Here is some of that song:

“Follow our example -- please imitate,
Healthy eating you can celebrate.
Make your style totally elite
And wish someone bon appetite.”

Friends, listen to our cries,
Its something you should memorize,
When it comes to food you gotta -
When it comes to food you gotta-
When it comes to food you gotta-
COLORIZE, MINIMIZE, MOBILIZE!
WHAT?
COLORIZE, MINIMIZE, MOBILIZE!
Huh?
COLORIZE, MINIMIZE, MOBILIZE!
Sometimes it’s a conversation over dinner that sparks an idea for a unique contribution to its community. In 2006, University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics was in the midst of an organization-wide technology refresh of its computers. At the same time, employee Nick Berigan from Information Technology Services was hearing over the dinner table each night from his partner, a teacher for the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), how students and teachers in the school were struggling to make do with outdated computer systems. Armed with this knowledge, Nick suggested an idea which has grown into an organizational commitment to get surplus technology resources from the hospital into the hands of students in our schools.

Because of the private nature of information that may have been stored on these computers, it took an added commitment and diligent work by the ITS department, to ensure any and all information was stripped from the systems. But with the expertise of the ITS staff, and the support of hospital administration, UW Hospital and Clinics was able to give more than 300 used computers to the MMSD, with another 300 earmarked for donation at the end of the fiscal year. UW Hospital and Clinics found a productive way to manage its surplus equipment, and schools and students throughout the district have access to updated technology and tools to further their education.
University of Wisconsin Hospital & Clinics, Madison

*Dental care parked on Main Street*

For many Wisconsin children, limited transportation and lack of access make it difficult to get to the dentist. UW Hospital and Clinics’ solution? Bring the dentists to the kids! To reach youngsters in 12 counties in southern and southwestern Wisconsin, UW Children’s Hospital dentists and hygienists staff the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile for eight months during the year. The 40-foot, 26,000-pound traveling dental office holds a laboratory, reception area, medical records and two patient exam rooms. Inside the enormous vehicle, staff provides x-rays, dental cleanings and fluoride applications. Through the combined sponsorship of UW Children’s Hospital and Ronald McDonald Charities, the Care Mobile has treated more than 25 hundred children since 2003 without insurance to receive treatment at no cost.

In another move to expand access to dental care, UW Hospital and Clinics played an instrumental role in enabling dental hygienists to bill Medicaid for preventive services. According to a recent survey, almost half of Wisconsin children attending schools with a higher percentage of low-income students have untreated decay, which leads to difficulty in eating, sleeping, learning and proper nutrition. Recognizing the serious implications of the problem, UW Hospital and Clinics leaders strongly supported a Medicaid rule change, which has allowed dental professionals to provide more preventive care to these children.
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

Upland Hills Health’s Wellness Event Provides Free Healthcare Screenings for Area Citizens

Conducting over 60 free health screenings, organizers declared the Women’s Wellness Event held Saturday, September 30, 2006 a success.

“Any time you can provide real health care screenings and information for free, it’s a worthwhile undertaking,” stated Patricia Lawson, Director of Marketing & Community Relations at Upland Hills Health. “Combine that with a mixture of light-hearted fun and socializing—and it was a great success!”

Health care screenings conducted for free included Cholesterol Screening and Skin Cancer Screening. The new and advanced Resting Metabolic Rate Measurement test was offered on a limited basis at cost.

Participants pre-registered for all screenings. Lawson noted that the screening appointments filled fast with many participants sighting their lack of health insurance as a motivator in attending.

Besides the free health screenings, attendees were able to hear the wit and wisdom of keynote speaker Lucy Gilles-Khour with her tips on stress management.

Attendees were greeted with delicious muffins, bagels and a fresh fruit spread. Mini display booths provided information on everything from volunteering and nutrition to at-home exercise programs and new therapies. Some chose to pamper themselves by indulging in a chair massage or shopping in the gift shop.

Two free cooking demonstration sessions were filled to capacity. Upland Hills Health’s registered dietician Jamie Austin demonstrated five easy, low-fat, and nutritious recipes that participants were able to sample. Information on nutrition and low fat cooking were the focus of the cooking demonstrations.

“Our goal is to reach out to community members and provide them with information on new health care options and healthier lifestyle choices,” explained Lawson. “The challenge is to effectively reach people that are already over-booked with life’s demands.”

The event culminated in the giveaway of two “Stress-Reliever” baskets brimming with everything from gourmet delicacies and soothing teas to herbal eye packs and scented bath gels.
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

*Upland Hills Health offers delicious lesson to area church camp*

Fifty-three hot and enthusiastic young church campers hiked to Upland Hills Health last July for a quick and tasty presentation by the Hospital’s nutrition services staff.

Campers munched on apple & dip snacks and milk while Director Liz Berkey, RD presented the importance and components of good nutrition.

Patricia Lawson, director of marketing & community relations explained, “If we teach children healthy habits while they’re young, we can help our community to stay healthier. We were happy to have the opportunity to reach out to these children.”

The church campers were part of the Grace Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School program. Each child went home with a bag of goodies that included a sport water bottle and packets of sunscreen.
In a focused effort to better serve the Hispanic residents in our community, Upland Hills Health and Southwest WI AHEC (Area Health Education Center) co-sponsored an initiative to train and increase awareness with area caregivers.

Efforts included developing Spanish resources; training nursing, social services, clinic and emergency personnel in basic Spanish language skills to overcome initial barriers; and providing admission documents that are translated into Spanish.

A survey was conducted of Upland Hills Health departments and area agencies to determine the Spanish resources currently available and what is needed. The results are available to all agencies to promote the sharing of resources.
Upland Hills Health and the Family Resource Center of Iowa County have teamed up to develop a support group for new parents. Julie Statz, early Childhood and Family Educator, will facilitate the program called Parenting: The First Year.

Designed to ease the burden and feeling of being overwhelmed in the new parent role, the group is available at no charge for anyone with a child from 0 to 12 months old. It’s a great way for new moms and dads to gather and discuss the joys and challenges of being new parents. The meetings are informative with guest speakers facilitating discussions on the topics the group determines to be most pertinent.

The meetings take place on the first and third Monday of each month and are held from noon to 1:30 pm in the Upland Hills Health Center Café. Upland Hills Health provides the promotion and development of the support group as well as the refreshments and facility. There is no charge to participants.

“This is a wonderful resource for new parents,” stated Patricia Lawson, director of marketing & community relations at Upland Hills Health. “And as premiere birthing center in Southwest Wisconsin, we feel compelled to continually develop and improve the programs available to new parents in our community.”
In an effort to increase survival rates of cardiac arrest patients, Upland Hills Health purchased advanced medical devices called ITDs—Impedance Threshold Devices—for area EMS squads.

The ITD increases circulation by regulating airflow into the lungs during the chest compression phase of CPR. The device has been shown to dramatically and significantly increase blood return to the heart and blood flow to the vital organs during CPR. Increasing blood flow until the heart can be restarted is critical to improving patient survival rates with good neurological function.

“Both Madison and Milwaukee paramedics use this technology,” stated John Mason, RT, Director of Cardiopulmonary Services and Captain of the Mount Horeb Fire Department, “and now, thanks to the investment made by Upland Hills Health, all Iowa County EMS services will be able to use this very new and very effective technology.”

While extremely advanced, it is also very easy to use. The ITD simply connects to the facemasks or ET tubes used when CPR is performed.
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

*Upland Hills Health co-sponsors senior Tai Chi classes*

Thanks to the sponsors, Grant County Center on Aging and Upland Hills Health, an eight-week Tai Chi class began on January 9th at the Monfort Meal Site in the Monfort Community Building. A certified RN that specializes in Senior Exercise Programs teaches the weekly sessions for eight weeks.

Area seniors taking advantage of this unique opportunity will build strength and balance. Tai Chi fundamentals combines the traditions of the Chinese practice with modern therapeutic principles to form an exercise plan that is beneficial to adults struggling with health conditions ranging from arthritis to heart disease.

Ideally suited to their physical needs and limitations, seniors over 60 that are able to walk and stand benefit from this exercise program. Individuals can reduce the chance of falls, improve their balance, and increase their endurance and strength for daily activities, thus adding to their overall quality of life.

Upland Hills Health’s sponsorship role includes promotions and 50% of the funding for students enrolling in the class.
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

*Upland Hills Health Family Safety Fair delights and educates*

The first Family Safety Fair held on Saturday May 5th was declared a success by participants and attendees alike. Over 200 people visited Upland Hills Health’s new ambulance garage to gather information on ways to keep their loved ones safe.

Activities ranged from the assembly and give away of Family First Aid Kits to face painting.

Curious children swarmed the Dodgeville fire truck and ambulance for a first-hand look at the equipment. EMS personnel and fireman were on hand to answer questions and sound the sirens.

The highlight of the event occurred around 2 p.m. when the Med-Flight crew landed and allowed people to get up close and personal with the helicopter while asking questions about the Med-Flight Service.

All in all it was a great opportunity for various county resources to come together for a great cause—the safety of families. From poison ivy identifier cards and the D.A.R.E program to gun safety and free gun locks to make-your-own emergency survival kits—you could find info on just about any safety issue. Patricia Lawson, Upland Hills Health Director of Marketing & Community Relations explained “The event was the brainchild of Upland Hills Health’s Emergency Services staff—and they did a super job of putting it all together. We definitely will consider holding another such event in the future.”
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

Cooking demo offers good food and good information

Guests enjoyed “A Happy Healthy Cooking Demo—Cooking up Strategies to Prevent Diabetes” at Upland Hills Health recently.

The event gave guests insight on cooking to prevent diabetes or its complications.

Dr. Paul Biere from Family Practice Associates and Elizabeth Berkey, Director of Nutrition Services, spoke to guests about the growing trend of diabetes and pre-diabetes. Both speakers emphasized the importance of physical activity and healthy eating to prevent the disease and its complications.

The crowd then enjoyed a cooking demonstration by Dietician Jaime Austin and Nutrition Services Supervisor Lisa Bowers, who cooked up three delicious and healthy dishes, including a pasta dish and a delicious berry dessert. Austin also answered cooking and diet questions from the audience. The dishes she prepared were then enjoyed for dinner.

Educational materials and some food samples were also available for guests to pick up as they left the event, rounding out an enjoyable night of great food and company, and a dash of learning sprinkled in.
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

Upland Hills Health’s Phelbotomist gives 2nd graders hands-on look at lab work

Loaded with Petri dishes and lab slides, Upland Hills Health staff member Amy Steffes, made the behind the scenes world of health care come alive for the second grade students of Mineral Point.

Keeping the lesson practical Steffes, worked with her co-workers to create bacteria specimens that showed the impact of not washing your hands and not washing your hands thoroughly. A chorus of “yuk” and “eeew” could be heard as the students passed around the fuzzy bacterial growth in the Petri dishes. “It gave the kids a chance to see the role of the lab in the hospital as well as reinforce the common-sense but important practice of washing hands,” explained Steffes.

Blood sample slides for the children to view through classroom microscopes were also part of the presentation.

Steffes saw the Mineral Point Parent Career Days held at the end of the school year as a golden opportunity to create interest in health care and awareness of Upland Hills Health as the local provider. Steffes’ son, Lance, was a second grader in Ms. Niehaus’ classroom.

If you would like a presentation on a health care topic or issue for your organization or group contact Patricia Lawson 930-7112.
Upland Hills Health sees $35,000 donation for the Free Clinic as a worthy investment in community health

At the June 2007 meeting the Upland Hills Health Board of Directors agreed to make a donation of $35,000 for the Community Connections Free Clinic.

The donation will allow the clinic to move from the cramped 1st floor area it shares with other community resources to the ground floor of the Iowa Street building it occupies in Dodgeville.

Specifically the money will be used for water remediation and trenching in the concrete floor. Once this is complete the Free Clinic will be able to proceed with its expansion plans.

Right now the Free Clinic occupies two exam rooms and minimal common space. By remodeling the ground floor of the building, the Free Clinic will be able to expand to four larger exam rooms and serve more un-insured, low-income patients. The remodel also makes room for a proposed dental clinic for Medicaid recipients with four dental chairs and a common area shared by the free medical and Medicaid dental clinics.

“It is in our community’s best interest to see that the Free Clinic is successful,” stated Karl Pustina, CFO of Upland Hills Health, “As an organization we are committed to finding solutions that will address the health care needs of our community. This donation demonstrates just that.”

In addition, Upland Hills Health donates $60,000 worth of lab and radiology service to the Community Connections Free Clinic.
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

Balance assessment for seniors in Montfort

Upland Hills Health and the Grant County Stepping Out Safely program were co-sponsors for a free balance assessment and injury prevention screening for seniors July 24th. The assessment, designed to help seniors identify potential balance or health problems that might pose safety concerns, included a blood pressure check, medication analysis, and balance and reach testing.

The screening was available to all seniors interested in ensuring their safety during these active months of the year.
Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

*Upland Hills Health Switches to environmentally friendly floor waxing system*

The Upland Hills Health housekeeping staff has started using a new “green” waxing system on the floors, reducing the amount of chemicals used on the floors and harmful fumes from those chemicals.

The new system by 3M, called Easy Shine Applicator, uses less VOCs, or volatile organic compounds, than other waxing systems, including the previous system used at Upland Hills Health. VOCs can contribute to respiratory irritation, headaches and other illnesses.

According to Gail Riechling, housekeeping supervisor, the system applies only the amount of wax that’s needed to the floor, cutting back on chemical use. Staff members wear a backpack-type device that keeps the chemicals contained. This reduces the amount of fumes that staff, patients, visitors and residents are exposed to. The floors are then buffed with an environmentally friendly reusable microfiber mop.

The move to the new waxing system adds to the environmental efforts currently at work at Upland Hills Health. Half of Upland Hills Health’s cleaning chemicals are now green-seal approved, including the vacuum cleaners, which have the Rug Institute green-seal approval. Styrofoam use has recently been virtually eliminated and more recycling bins are showing up all over the hospital.
Realizing that health care billing and payment procedures are becoming increasingly complex Upland Hills Health recently established the new role of Patient Benefit Specialists. Two full time experts are dedicated to helping patients access their benefits in a timely manner. This expertise is available to all customers at no charge.

For patients that need financial assistance, the Patient Benefits Specialists can help them fill out the necessary paperwork to access Upland Hills Health’s Community Care. Community Care is a program offered through Upland Hills Health to help qualified patients with their medical bills.

While not all patients will qualify for Community Care, the Patient Benefit Specialists work to seek discounts where possible and develop customized payment agreements that match the individual’s needs.

Any uninsured patient that comes to the Upland Hills Health Emergency Room or Urgent Care is given a payment packet, including the hospital’s normal payment schedule and information on applying for Community Care. If someone comes in as an inpatient and is uninsured, the Patient Benefits Specialists will visit with them to determine if there are programs available to help offset their medical bill costs.

The specialists also assist in answering billing questions and working with patients and their insurance companies prior to procedures, ensuring patients are aware of what they will owe and allowing payment upfront.

“We see the Patient Benefit Specialists and the job they do as one more opportunity to offer our patients and community great service,” states Community Relations Director Patricia Lawson.
Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua

**Hirsch Clinic promoting healthy child development through Reach Out and Read program**

Kristy Wiltrout, R.N., and Dr. Brian Woody of Vernon Memorial Healthcare’s (VMH) Hirsch Clinic, have taken the love of reading to their own children to another level, and are now helping to enhance the lives of patients and their families. In September of 2006, the *Reach Out and Read* (ROR) program launched at Hirsch Clinic-VMH. In order to become a part of this national literacy initiative, Wiltrout and Woody underwent an application process. Once accepted, Hirsch Clinic-VMH was awarded $900 to establish the program and purchase books. *Reach Out and Read* builds upon the unique relationship that exists between medical providers and parents. Wiltrout says, “This is a great opportunity to promote childhood development and learning on a routine basis.”

The ROR program trains doctors and nurses to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud to their children and to present children with books at their pediatric check-ups. Children of all economic backgrounds from ages six months to five years are given two developmentally appropriate books at routine well-child check-ups. As a result of attending the appointments over a child’s first five years, this program helps to provide an enriching personal library.

It is a vision of this literacy driven team, to have ROR implemented and available at all VMH clinics.
Watertown Area Health Services, Watertown

Watertown Area Health Services assists in providing AEDs to local schools

Several years ago, Watertown Area Health Services' board of directors formed a community endowment fund to provide monies for activities that further the organization's mission to create healthier communities and meet identified community development needs. The fund's priority activities meet the needs of special populations, such as minorities, frail elderly, people with disabilities and children.

This year, the community endowment fund has identified the presence of automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) in community schools as a priority need.

Over the last several years, the presence of automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) in community settings has saved thousands of cardiac arrest victims. When there is no AED present, cardiac arrest survival rates hover around five percent; with an AED on-site, survival rates have soared to as high as 74 percent.

Currently, the endowment fund is providing assistance to schools in the city of Watertown so that one AED may be available at each school. In this project, the community endowment fund will assist each school by providing financial assistance for 50 percent of the cost of one AED (up to $1,000) for each school; if a school has already purchased an AED, the fund will reimburse the school for 50 percent of the cost of one AED (again up to $1,000). In addition, Watertown Area Health Services will provide the school with a list of training opportunities so schools can identify and train responders in the use of AEDs. Watertown Area Health Services will also provide the required medical director oversight for schools.

Other priority programs identified by Watertown Area Health Services' community endowment fund include community health services and clinics, community health education, disease prevention and education, support programs, self-help programs, community-building activities, youth fitness, wellness and leadership development.
Watertown Area Health Services  
*VolunTeens give back to the community and learn about health careers*

For local teenagers in Watertown and their friends at Watertown Area Health Services, the benefits of volunteering are a two-way street. This fall, Watertown Area Health Services introduced its new VolunTeen program. “The program provides a structured volunteering opportunity for those teens who want to give some of their time and learn more about healthcare careers,” says Mary Schultz, volunteer program coordinator. “Because teenagers are so busy these days with activities and work, we structured the program in a way that hopefully minimizes scheduling conflicts and maximizes the benefit that the teens get from volunteering.”

VolunTeens make a one-semester commitment to volunteering at Watertown Area Health Services. Every VolunTeen works from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. each Tuesday night. Throughout the semester, the VolunTeens rotate their assignments in different areas of the hospital. This fall semester, Watertown High School senior Kallie Henze spent about six weeks in the hospital’s Inpatient Center, then rotated to her current assignment in the hospital’s OB department. After that assignment is complete, Henze will move on to working in the Rehab department. “I’m planning to attend UW-Oshkosh for nursing next year,” says Henze. “This experience is a good way to learn about working in healthcare. I’d definitely recommend it to other students.”

In addition to getting a good look at the way various hospital departments function, the teens are also finding it rewarding to bring a little something extra to their volunteer responsibilities. After spending several weeks with the residents at the Highland House assisted living facility in Watertown, Rachel McManama, a senior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, asked some of her talented friends from school to entertain the residents one evening. “They’ll be playing the piano and singing for the residents,” Rachel says.

The fall 2006 school semester was the first opportunity for teens to be part of the VolunTeen program. According to Schultz, the mission of the VolunTeen program is, “Through volunteerism, we provide the enhancement of healthcare services at Watertown Area Health Services, ensuring a quality healthcare experience for the greater Watertown community.”

The VolunTeen program is for students 16 years and older who are willing to commit to working one night per week for one school semester to assist professionals at Watertown Area Health Services in enhancing patient care. Benefits to the students include the chance to explore health care opportunities, make new friends and valuable contacts, enhance opportunities for future employment, and earn academic and employment references. “I’ve always been interested in going into physical therapy,” says VolunTeen Colette Swenson, a Watertown High School sophomore. “As a VolunTeen, I’m glad that I’ve had the chance to see how a physical therapy department works on a daily basis.”

Areas of Watertown Area Health Services that have benefited from VolunTeens this semester include: radiology, Watertown Highland House (assisted living), inpatient center, obstetrics, and Rehab and Sports Medicine. “The teens who have volunteered in our department have been very helpful to us,” says Carol Otto, of Watertown Area Health Services’ Rehab and Sports Medicine. “They take care of a lot of behind-the-scenes tasks and are very willing workers who ask what else they can do to help out.”
Watertown Area Health Services, Watertown

"Weigh to Win” kick-off

Did you make the same New Year’s resolution to “lose weight” this year? Well, it’s not too late to join nearly 700 of your friends and neighbors in our community-wide weight loss challenge.

On January 15, Watertown Area Health Services’ “Weigh to Win” program will officially begin. “Weigh to Win” is a free 10-week community-wide weight loss challenge designed to promote healthy lifestyles. The program emphasizes weight loss and fitness while encouraging positive health habits. The challenge will provide fun, educational opportunities that focus on long-term lifestyle changes. The program will address all factors related to being overweight or obese, including health risks such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body mass index.

This Weigh to Win program is just one way Watertown Area Health Services will celebrate and share our 100th anniversary with residents of our community. Gifts are often part of celebrations, and what better gift to give than the gift of health. “Weigh to Win” is being offered to local residents through Watertown Area Health Services’ Wellness Works outreach programming, with funding from Tomorrow’s Hope.

On January 10, they held an official “kick-off” ceremony at the Watertown High School auditorium. The community came out in full-force, and filled the auditorium. Watertown’s Mayor John David spoke about his personal weight loss success and inspired the community to set realistic goals, and stick to their plan.

If you have questions or need additional information about our Weigh to Win challenge, please visit their website at www.watertownareahealthservices.com, and click on the “Weigh to Win” icon. The site contains the registration form, as well as all the program details. Or, you may also contact the Wellness Works office at 920-206-8488.


Watertown residents hoping to lose some weight, had to wait in line Wednesday night. “We are doing our Weigh To Win campaign,” says Mike Nordness with Watertown Area Health Services. Wednesday’s initial weigh in is the kick off to the campaign. For the next ten weeks, residents will track their progress, have access to nutrition experts and discounts at certain fitness centers. “We do have a slightly higher obesity rate than the Wisconsin average,” says Nordness. Nordness was hoping for 100 people; more than 600 showed up and signed up to slim down. And for hundreds of different reasons, everyone had the same goal. “To start off the new year right - there were some extra pounds that I wanted to lose,” says Lisa McCloskey “That’s our goal - to see less of us by April,” say ten teachers from St. Bernard’s school. The teachers plan on keeping each other motivated. “Yeah, this is a good program and it’s ten weeks to get us off to a good start.”

They need only turn to their mayor, John David, for inspiration. “I have lost quite a bit of weight over the years and about four years ago, I started walking myself. I have lost about 90 some odd pounds in about three years.” The Weigh to win goal is less daunting - one pound per week. But with more than 600 people on board, Nordness says reaching that goal would mean 3 fewer tons weighing Watertown down. “We think it’s going to be a fantastic thing for the community, and maybe an example for the state or even the nation.”
Watertown Area Health Services

*Weigh to Win*

Amanda Roberts has struggled with weight loss for almost 30 years. This year, she learned that she’s not alone, when she joined Watertown Area Health Services’ *Weigh to Win*, the program that helped the “town” to lose a ton.

As a gift to residents in celebration of the organization’s 100th anniversary, Watertown Area Health Services kicked off 2007 with a free 10-week weight loss challenge. The Weigh to Win program provided free diet and exercise education, regular weigh-ins, and links to a wide variety of community weight loss resources. The program encouraged team support networks and provided prizes, contests, and “health assignments” to keep participants motivated.

An amazing 820 residents participated in the Weigh to Win program. At the program finale, 300 participants completed a final weigh in to record a total community weight loss of 2,023 pounds in just 10 weeks.

Feedback from Weigh to Win participants was both enthusiastic and heartfelt. Amanda, told us this program changed her life:

“A friend of mine had mentioned the Weigh to Win program and asked me if I wanted to join their team. Thank goodness I decided to check it out with them! They are the most fun group of girls and they all helped me to re-motivate and get back on track! It was tough at first, but everyone was so encouraging, and we each helped each other stay accountable when it came to working out and staying on whatever “diet” we were doing.

All in all this has been a great experience! Not only have I gotten 13 pounds closer to my goal, but I have also made some great friends and learned that I am not alone when it comes to the day-to-day weight loss struggles!

Thanks again for starting this program, and I hope it continues in the future for so many other people to benefit from!”

In planning Weigh to Win, Watertown Area Health Services found that weight loss was a major health concern of community members, with over 61% of residents reporting themselves as being “overweight”. The organization learned that up to 67% of local residents do not participate in regular physical activity, and that the diets of 82% of residents do not include the recommended 5 daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

Most alarming, the mortality rates from cardiovascular disease in both Dodge and Jefferson Counties (the counties served by Watertown Area Health Services) are significantly higher that those of Wisconsin as a whole. Weigh to Win was the first of several community programs that Watertown Area Health Services has planned to attack the region’s two greatest health disparities: heart disease and obesity.
Alyssa, age 5, has met “Mr. Yuk.” She knows that Mr. Yuk means poison, and she’s taught her parents how to keep their home safe for her younger brother, Sam. And she’s taught Sam to stay away from bottles with the Mr. Yuk sticker on them.

Each spring, Watertown Area Health Services and the Volunteers of Watertown Area Health Services reach out to area kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students, teaching the youth about poison prevention.

Initiated in 1988, the poison prevention program initially reached 5 schools and 350 children. With extremely positive feedback from educators and parents, the program has grown to reach more than 1,200 youth at a total of 30 schools annually.
Watertown Area Health Services

*Heart health screenings*

While heart disease is the leading cause of death among women, many women are not aware that they can reduce cardiovascular disease risk as much as 82 percent by managing risk factors and leading a healthy lifestyle.

With a “Know Your Numbers” message, Watertown Area Health Services provided free heart health risk assessments to 100 local women. These women received blood pressure, total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, diabetes, and weight screenings. Using the Framingham Heart Study definitions, each woman received a “High,” “Moderate,” or “Low” risk score, as well as immediate consultation with an exercise physiologist to create a care plan based on their risk factors.

With this particular program, 16 women were identified as “moderate” risk, and 8 women identified as “high” risk. By “knowing their numbers,” these women were empowered to make healthy lifestyle changes, consult with their physicians, and to seek any follow-up care necessary to prevent cardiovascular disease.
Westfields Hospital, New Richmond

*Westfields Hospital recognized for support of technical education*

Westfields Hospital has been awarded the C.L. Grieber Award of Merit by the Wisconsin Association for Career & Technical Education (WACTE) for its efforts to promote, improve and develop career and technical education in Wisconsin.

Companies recognized must have demonstrated a concern for career and technical education as evidenced through activities such as sponsored programs, personal services, supportive publications, financial support, or meritorious activities.

Larry Gee, Dean of Instructional Operations, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) commended the hospital’s efforts at the WACTE annual conference held in Stevens Point by saying, “Westfields Hospital has been a solid partner in education through its many contributions and services to our district.”

He cited Westfields Hospital for providing numerous clinical opportunities for WITC’s associate degree nursing program. “They have been very flexible in working with our day and evening clinical sectionals allowing teaching opportunities on their medical campus. Westfields Hospital staff members are instructors and facilitators for these clinicals.”

“In addition,” Gee continued, “both equipment and supplies have been donated to WITC by Westfields Hospital for use in the classrooms to advance the curriculum competencies. They provide additional assistance and support in ordering nursing supplies and small equipment. Our nursing program has greater success thanks to the leadership and direction of Ginger Murphy, Vice President of Patient Services for Westfields Hospital, who as a member of the WITC program advisory committee has been a positive contributor of the associate degree nursing advisory committee for a number of years.”

Not only has Westfields Hospital been a dedicated supporter of our existing programs, but members of Westfields Hospital executive leadership have also played an active role in WITC’s Health Alliance Task Force. Through collaborations Westfields Hospital and WITC invited other hospitals in the region to join efforts to raise awareness across the district for health careers. This task force sought solutions for the shortage of health care workers in the WITC district and surrounding areas. Efforts of the Alliance have resulted in advocacy programs, videos for middle school and high school career fairs and a presence at the technical college job fair. Thanks to the persistence of the Alliance, WITC will add a full-time instructor in the health field in the fall. This will enable WITC to start a new associate degree nursing section each semester, thus shortening the wait times to begin the nursing program.”

“It is truly an honor to be able to present this award to Westfields Hospital,” says Gee. “But an even greater satisfaction comes when we see the results of successful training. Many WITC graduates receive the highest recommendation in the form of employment at Westfields Hospital, not only in nursing field, but also graduates of our accounting program, medical administrative specialist program, and medical assistant program.”

Wisconsin Association for Career & Technical Education is comprised of nearly 1,000 employees from the state’s technical college system. Each year each of the sixteen districts may nominate individuals or businesses for the C.L. Greiber Award. This year Westfields Hospital was chosen from a field of 7 businesses and 6 individuals nominated from the 16 districts in the state.
Westfields Hospital, New Richmond

*Westfields Hospital fights obesity in children*

For the past eight years, several organizations in New Richmond, Wisconsin have worked together to host a Kids Asset Carnival. The mission of the event is to promote the 40 developmental assets that have been identified by the Search Institute as necessary to grow healthy and resilient children.

Westfields Hospital participated by presenting a hands-on activity designed to teach children how to make good choices when selecting snack foods and what the consequences of poor choices might mean. Linda Stefonek, registered dietitian, brought samples of healthy snack foods for kids to taste and let kids wear a 25-pound “fat” vest to see what it feels like to carry the extra weight. Grocery shopping lists were available for parents to encourage them to keep healthy snacks readily available.

Parents and children surprised themselves to find they liked the taste of some “healthy” choices they had never tried before. “I try to encourage parents to have a prepared list of healthy snack items handy when they go grocery shopping. Replace one or two items each trip to the store,” says Stefonek. “Generally if you keep fruits, nuts, veggies and dips prepared, handy and ready to go, kids will eat them,” she adds.

The Westfields Hospital demonstration promoted Asset #31--Healthy lifestyle--child begins to value good health habits and Asset #32--Planning and decision-making--child learns beginning skills of how to plan ahead and makes decisions at an appropriate developmental level. The event, which is geared at the Pre-K to sixth grade level, served 193 families and 400 individuals.
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

**Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare receives “Champion for Change” award from Hospitals for a Healthy Environment**

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare (WFH) has received a “Champion for Change” Award from Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E), a national organization dedicated to improving the environmental performance of the health care sector. The Champions for Change Award honors the work of the organization’s local environmental stewardship leaders to improve environmental performance and promote the practice of environmentally responsible health care throughout the industry.

“It’s an honor to receive this prestigious award,” remarks Terry McGuire, Ed.D., Senior Vice President – Mission Services, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare. “It celebrates the work we have done to protect our environment and make facilities safer and healthier for patients, staff and our communities.”

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is being recognized for its role in working with H2E to unveil an innovative data collection tool to help health care systems analyze data to better manage environmental issues and waste management processes. WFH was the first health care system in the country to use the tool as part of the H2E pilot program. By collecting and analyzing data from each of its hospitals, the system was able to identify and implement efficiencies and cost savings.

“Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is at the forefront of a fundamental shift in the health care industry toward the proactive improvement of public health,” said Laura Brannen, Director of the H2E program. “The organization is driving the sector’s use of healthier and more responsible products and practices. In doing so, they are making it easier for health care facilities to operate in a way that protects the health of both people and our global environment.”

In addition to the system award, H2E presented Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – All Saints in Racine, Wisconsin with the “Partners for Change” Award, which is given annually to hospitals that have made significant and sustainable progress toward reducing waste, preventing pollution and eliminating mercury. By meeting stringent benchmarks for mercury elimination, All Saints also earned H2E’s “Making Medicine Mercury Free” Award, a one-time honor given to hospitals that have met the challenge of becoming virtually mercury-free.

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is a Catholic, not-for-profit organization with more than 100 sites in Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois including 15 hospitals, four long-term care facilities, two home health agencies, more than 3,500 physicians, 70 physician office sites with approximately 600 medical group physicians, and nearly 23,000 associates. Started more than 125 years ago and formally incorporated in 1983, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is sponsored by the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters. Corporate Services Offices are located in Wheaton, Illinois and Glendale, Wisconsin.

For more information about the organization’s involvement in H2E, contact Terry McGuire at 630-909-6912 or terry.mcguire@wfhc.org. For more information about H2E, visit its Web site at www.h2e-online.org.
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare breaks the silence on colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer - cancer of the colon and rectum - is quickly becoming the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. At least half of these deaths could be prevented if men and women, age 50 and better, were more proactive about routine screenings.

In an effort to motivate this target demographic, Wheaton Franciscan Cancer Care once again sponsored “Break the Silence: Win the Race Against Colorectal Cancer,” an annual seminar to promote awareness of the disease and to encourage adults to have colonoscopies. Two free, public seminars were held in March at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Wauwatosa and the Franklin Public Library – attracting more than 125 individuals at each location.

The seminars featured well-known gastroenterologists, Aaron Baltz, MD, and Ali Diba, MD, who discussed early detection and the importance of early screening. The physicians were joined by registered dietitians, Mary Schulteis and Elena Ferrise, who gave tips on nutritional habits to help protect against the disease.

Wheaton Franciscan Cancer Care increased attendance this year through a straightforward, “no frills” advertising campaign. The campaign included a print ad placed in the main news section of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and on-air spots by WMIL-FM radio’s Karen Dalessandro and Scott Dolphin, hosts of the seminars. Radio commercials and an interview with a registered nurse also sparked listener’s interest in the seminars.

In addition to these media tactics, attendees were offered refreshments and a chance to win door prizes including: gift baskets containing scented oils, bath soaps and gourmet fruit; gift certificates for free yoga, massages and aromatherapy; and a four pack of tickets to any Milwaukee Brewer’s game.

Not only did Wheaton Franciscan Cancer Care provide a compelling and enlightening event, but it also focused on gaining public attention through impressive rewards.
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – Elmbrook Memorial, Brookfield

"Brookfield in Motion" – Building healthier lifestyles one step at a time

Elmbrook Memorial Hospital has joined forces with several key community organizations in a combined effort to put “Brookfield in Motion.” The Brookfield in Motion initiative is a unique partnership between the hospital and several government, school and business organizations. The group’s common goal is to reduce chronic disease in the community through promoting healthy living, encouraging regular exercise, and raising awareness to the health and wellness services available throughout the community.

Collaborating groups include: Elmbrook Memorial; City of Brookfield Parks and Recreation, Police and Fire departments; Village of Elm Grove Parks and Recreation, Police and Fire departments; the Elmbrook School District, and Elmbrook Senior Center

Whether it is encouraging community members to utilize the area’s numerous bike and walking paths, play with their family at one of several parks, listen to a health professional speak on a wellness issue or get up and exercise at the senior center, the Brookfield in Motion collaboration is committed to offering a variety of opportunities for exercise, improving the quality of life or becoming educated on wellness.

The collaboration allows for the coordination of promotional materials to provide wellness and healthy living tips through articles, fact sheets and Web pages. (See Brookfield in Motion at www.ci.brookfield.wi.us or www.elmbrookmemorial.com). Additionally, the group is able to combine resources for programs for both the senior population and school aged children. This includes speakers on health related information, community activities/opportunities during summer months and developing a calendar promoting wellness activities. Each year, an activity calendar that offers a daily suggestion for getting out and getting active is distributed to all elementary school students in the district.

To celebrate the start of its second year of the Brookfield in Motion campaign, the collaboration coordinated the “Brookfield in Motion Play Day”, a free event for all local students on the first day of summer vacation. Play Day 2006 had over 300 in attendance and 2007 grew to over 500. Activities included free healthy activities for elementary and middle school students, mini massages for moms and dads, a Tai Chi demonstration, games and life skills activities and a Bike Safety course. Health related information and handouts were available to all attendees.

Elmbrook Memorial is pleased to be a founding and active member of the Brookfield in Motion collaboration. Together with other local agencies, we hope to make a lasting difference in the health and wellness of the community we serve.
Teen outreach program makes strides in the community

Since 1995, Milwaukee’s adolescent birth rate had remained virtually unchanged (20% of all births) while most of the U.S. experienced a decline in teen births during that same time period. Just recently, however, Milwaukee has begun to experience a downward turn. From a high of 20% in 1999 and 2000, the teen birth rate has dropped to 17% in a recent report.

This encouraging statistic shows the effectiveness of a Teen Outreach program, sponsored by Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – St. Francis. The program serves more than 5,000 students at 25 middle and high schools in the Milwaukee area. It has grown so much that three additional nurse educators are now assisting in reaching out to teens.

St. Francis partners with schools such as Pulaski High School and Bradley Tech High School and brings in registered nurses who have frank discussions with teens about social diseases, teen pregnancy and the need for abstinence. The nurses show graphic photos of what can happen to physically active teens.

Most important, our nurses discuss the importance of self-esteem. Basically, girls with goals don’t get into trouble.

The positive influence that our team has on students often leaves them in tears, hugging our staff and thanking them for caring about them. Ann Hanson, RN, Supervisor for the Reiman Center for Health and Wellness, is a leader of this initiative. Her calm yet reassuring demeanor wins students over. Staff receives pages of comments from students after they’ve completed evaluations of the class.

At St. Francis, we believe in helping the community and the Milwaukee Public Schools make strides in reducing the teen pregnancy rate. These students want to be somebody after going through our Teen Outreach Program. St. Francis receives yearly grants through the Foundation for St. Francis to keep this positive story going.
According to the City of Milwaukee Health Department, Milwaukee’s infant mortality rate (IMR) is significantly higher than the national rate, 40th among the 50 largest cities in the U.S., and worse than countries such as Cuba, Chile, Poland, Costa Rica and Kuwait. The IMR disparity between African Americans and Whites ranked Milwaukee the 4th worst among 16 cities measured.

What accounts for these grim statistics? The largest contributing factor is prematurity driven by lack of prenatal care, teen pregnancy, short intervals between pregnancies, lack of education about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and infections, and smoking during pregnancy.

Into the heart of this seemingly hopeless situation, the St. Joseph Women’s Outpatient Center injects daily doses of care, education, and compassion. Located inside Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare - St. Joseph— in the heart of one of Wisconsin’s highest infant mortality zip codes – the Women’s Outpatient Center (WOC) provides prenatal and gynecological services to underserved women. A resident run clinic, the WOC also provides a superior learning experience for Medical College of Wisconsin residents mentored by attending obstetricians.

Among the many challenges we face is our patient population, many of whom have been dismissed by other clinics for non-compliance with instructions. Our staff go to extraordinary lengths to ensure mothers-to-be get the prenatal care they need, calling patients and emergency contacts as many as three times to reschedule appointments, even sending certified letters when necessary. Our nurses also provide extensive and comprehensive education for our patients, from their first appointment throughout their entire pregnancy.

Overcoming barriers of culture, language, economics, education, and perception of the health care industry, our staff works very hard to build trusting relationships in order to keep patients on a regular schedule of prenatal care. We learn the names of patients, families and significant others. We conduct care conferences to gain insight into the social, psychological or financial issues affecting them. And we ensure culturally competent care through staff education, bilingual caregivers, interpreters, and staff diversity.

To extend our reach and effectiveness in the community, we established a network with other low cost providers of OB care, we hired a perinatal resource nurse funded by the Black Health Coalition, we partnered with the March of Dimes to provide free baby care products through our Stork’s Nest program, and we provide additional prenatal care to uninsured families through Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare’s Community Care program.

With an ever-increasing patient population, our multidisciplinary team of nurses, physicians, social workers, financial counselors, and interpreters has produced some highly impressive outcomes. In 2004, among the babies of the mothers we cared for:

- Only 15% went to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
- Only 10% were born before 37 weeks gestation
- Only 5% were born before 35 weeks
- Only 12% were considered low birth weight

Much remains to be done in this highly challenging area of health care, but The St. Joseph Women’s Outpatient Center stands as a beacon of hope, making a difference for society’s most vulnerable citizens.