

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Uncompensated Care/Free Clinics

Fear of a bill should never prevent a patient from seeking care at a Wisconsin hospital. Wisconsin hospital charity care programs provided \$226 million to more than 700 patients a day in 2009. The stories that follow illustrate the deep commitment and continuing concern that hospitals have to their patients to ensure they receive the care they need regardless of their ability to pay.

Community Care

A couple moved to Wisconsin, got married, and after they got back from their honeymoon, the husband got very sick and ended up hospitalized at Columbus Community Hospital. While they did not have insurance coverage at the time of his visits, they were actively searching for personal health insurance. To complicate the matter, they both are working at reduced wages from what they were making while living out of state, they do not get health benefits through their employer, nor could they afford what turned out to be a \$30,000 hospital bill! We worked with them on Community Care and were able to grant them an 88.8 percent reduction in their bill.

They are very grateful for what Columbus Community Hospital was able to do to help them out in their time of need.

Columbus Community Hospital, Columbus

New hope for military couple amid growing challenges

When Brittany's husband, Tyler, came back from military deployment, he was not the man she married. After serving with his military unit in Honduras a couple years ago, Tyler returned home angry, depressed and prone to combat flashbacks and panic attacks.

Doctors diagnosed the 21-year-old with post traumatic stress disorder. Over several months, he wound up in the emergency room three times. Physicians sent him twice to the Fond du Lac County Acute Psychiatric Unit for treatment.

"With all the medications they ended up putting him on, they counteracted and he started having suicidal thoughts," Brittany, 21, said.

Months later when Tyler finally came home, things were looking better for him. But the couple's medical bills were rapidly reaching \$10,000. The couple couldn't find a financial assistance program that accepted military members.

Then Brittany had her own health scare. "I ended up having a heart problem. Doctors don't really know what happened, my heart just stopped beating," she said.

When Brittany awoke at New London Family Medical Center, physicians gave her paperwork for ThedaCare's Caring Hearts Financial Assistance Program. The charity-care program not only accepted the military couple but has since relieved them of nearly \$15,000 in medical bills. Brittany said without ThedaCare's help, the financial stress and worry could have taken a much harder physical and mental toll on the couple.

"It feels like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. If I didn't have it, I'd go crazy with trying to figure out how we're going to pay for it," she said.

Tyler follows up with his physicians each month, something that might not be possible without Caring Hearts.

(continued on next page)

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

“He’s finally turning back into the person he used to be,” Brittany said. “I’m really thankful there’s a program out there if you don’t have the resources to get insurance through your job or even the military, to support you in the hard times.”

New London Family Medical Center, New London

Jill’s Story



Jill has suffered from hypertension for years; however, with no health insurance she could not afford paying out of pocket for a primary caregiver and medications. When she was at health fairs or church events, however, she often passed the free blood pressure screenings because she did not want to know about a problem she couldn’t treat. One Wednesday afternoon, at her local food pantry, she gave in to the pressure of the student nurses conducting screenings and had her pressure taken. True to form, it was high enough at 149/100 to make the students scramble for their instructor.

This time, however, treatment was offered. Columbia St. Mary’s Community-based Chronic Disease Management (CCDM) Clinic at New Life Food Pantry offered an immediate nursing assessment, lab testing and an assessment by a nurse practitioner who prescribed medication that was given to Jill that day. Jill was also provided nutritional and lifestyle education to help her improve her hypertension.

After some time at the clinic, Jill had further medical issues that the clinic was not able to address so she and the clinic’s social worker worked together to get Jill on GAMP, the county health insurance program. Finding a primary medical provider who accepted GAMP coverage was just one step Jill has made to take control of her health. Even though her primary medical treatment continues at the GAMP-funded provider, Jill returns to CCDM to participate in the cooking demonstrations the clinic offers. Jill came to a recent cooking demonstration to sample the vegetable stir fry and to show off her 122/82 blood pressure, that is due, in large part, to the CCDM clinic and HWPP funding.

Columbia St. Mary’s, Inc., Milwaukee

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.



Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at www.WiServePoint.org.