

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Environmental and Occupational Health Hazards

The Wisconsin State Health Plan describes exposure to toxic substances, noise, vibration and other hazardous agents in the environment or the workplace as contributing to disease. Hospitals work diligently to protect the health of their employees by ensuring that they provide a safe, environmentally-friendly workplace. They also share this knowledge with the community by sponsoring activities that encourage the safe disposal of mercury thermometers, medications and “sharps.”

Providing safe medication disposal



Oconto Falls Police Chief Mike Roberts at the CMH Pharmacy where people brought in nearly 40 pounds of unwanted medication for safe disposal.

The Community Memorial Hospital (CMH) Pharmacy was the site of a very successful medication drop-off event. On Saturday, September 25, nearly 40 pounds of unwanted medications were collected in just three hours. The event was a joint effort with the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, the CMH Pharmacy, and the city of Oconto Falls to eliminate a major source of abused prescription drugs and reduce the hazard they pose to our families and communities in a safe, legal, and environmentally sound way.

“People appreciate the opportunity to safely dispose of these medications,” said City Police Chief Mike Roberts who supervised the collection. A national marketing campaign by the DEA helped to make the effort a success, with announcements running on state and national newscasts. The agency reports that across the United States, approximately 4,094 sites participated in this nationwide program to remove potentially dangerous controlled substances from our nation’s medicine cabinets. Prescription drug abuse and its consequences are a key focus of the DEA.

Community Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls

Improving lead screening rates using statewide immunization registry data

Lead is an environmental toxin linked to neurological, developmental and behavioral problems in children. Screening for elevated lead levels and early interventions are effective ways to limit these serious effects. Being deeply entrenched in the neighborhood and culture of the 53204 Zip code in which 8.8 percent of children aged 1-5 years were found to have elevated blood lead-levels (EBLL), the concerned practitioners at Aurora Clarke Square Family Health Center confirmed that of the children tested within their health center, 9.6 percent had EBLL.

Aurora’s Clarke Square Family Health Center offers a wide range of services for people of all ages, from birth through the senior years, and is housed in a near south side supermarket for convenient access. Advance practice nurses, nurse practitioners and midwives provide primary care, prenatal care and wellness check-ups. The Clarke Square clinic has both English- and Spanish-speaking providers, as well as a Hmong translator. This health center is affiliated with the University of Wisconsin Medical School and Aurora UW Medical Group.

These concerned practitioners set out to determine whether the use of a clinic database using information from a statewide immunization registry could improve lead screening rates in their health center. They designed a longitudinal cohort study of children age birth to 84 months.

All children between 0 and 6 years of age seen at Clarke Square were entered into a lead screening database, which combined information from the Wisconsin Immunization Registry and the state lead screening database. This database was then used to identify and track patients needing lead screening.

Parents were contacted by letter and a follow-up telephone call every three months to arrange screening based on Milwaukee Public Health Department lead screening guidelines, including children who either needed to be screened or those 9.6 percent of children who had been screened and found to have EBLL.

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Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

During the first three months of tracking, there was a 12 percent increase in the number of patients screened.

“Creating this database and protocol to reach out to our families was a cost-effective strategy to confirm our hypothesis that tracking lead screening using the statewide immunization registry can result in increased lead screening compliance. Our short-term goal to increase lead screening compliance in our clinic was successful,” says Jacob L. Bidwell, MD, Medical Director of Aurora Clarke Square Family Health Center. “Our long-term goal is to improve adherence to public health department recommendations countywide and statewide using this public health model.”

During 2009, Aurora Clarke Square Family Health Center served 1,331 patients with 6,305 patient visits.

Aurora Sinai Medical Center/Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center, Milwaukee

Supporting local farmers is a win-win

Amy Miller, director of nutrition services at Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics (SPMHC), has a new reason to be excited about food. After a three-year journey, Miller has integrated locally-grown foods into SPMHC’s cafeteria and patient meals.

“First and foremost we wanted to bring our food purchases back in the area,” said Miller. “What better way for us to support the community than to buy locally?”

To make this possible, Miller determined what food safety and liability insurance requirements would be needed to buy locally. After she could ensure those were met, she connected with local farmers and produce auctions to find vendors that met her criteria for cost and quality.

SPMHC now uses locally-grown produce (when in season), poultry, beef, pork and buffalo. Miller is in the process of adding local dairy products, too.

“You can definitely taste the difference, and you can see the difference,” said Miller. “The meat is tender and juicy and the produce is vibrant and flavorful.”

Miller feels it’s a win-win situation, and she’s heard great comments on the food from patients and staff.

“We want to do it because it makes sense for our community — and it’s better food.”

Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital, Prairie du Sac



Amy Klamer, nutrition aide, serves up locally grown produce in SPMHC’s cafeteria

15% of combined food budget will go to locally produced and processed food

Marking the annual meeting of the Producers & Buyers Co-op held at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire, Steve Ronstrom, CEO and President, HSHS Division (Western Wisconsin), announced that Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s Hospitals would commit 15 percent of their food budgets to locally produced food.

“We have met our initial commitment of \$200,000 a year to purchasing local food. This is the fulfillment of a commitment of 10 percent of our \$2 million food budget,” said Ronstrom.

“Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s Hospitals together will commit 15 percent of their combined food budgets to the purchase of local food,” he added. “This commitment supports the health and wellness of our patients, cafeteria patrons, physicians and Meals on Wheels patrons. It also supports our family farms, creates jobs, and supports our local economy and community.”

The hospitals’ budgets total \$2.3 million in a 12-month period; 15 percent would be approximately \$345,000 toward purchasing local food over a 12 month period. The two hospitals’ local food purchases have included beef, poultry, buffalo, pork, fish, cheese and fresh produce grown year-round in local greenhouses.

In 2008, Sacred Heart Hospital pledged 10 percent of its \$2 million food budget to purchase local food. Soon after, St. Joseph’s Hospital committed a portion of its food budget to local food as well.

“In the 1990s alone, Wisconsin lost almost 40 percent of its dairy farms,” said Rick Beckler, Director of Hospitality Services, Sacred Heart Hospital, and a Co-op board member. “It’s our responsibility to buy local food to not only provide the best in nutrition, but to support our local agriculture industry.”

“Being fresher, local food has a longer shelf life, is more nutritious, tastes better and requires less fuel for transport,” said Beckler. “We’ve received an outpouring of warm compliments on our food from patient and employees.”

Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire & St. Joseph’s Hospital, Chippewa Falls

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.