

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Social and Economic Factors that Influence Health

There is a strong association between social and economic factors and adverse health outcomes. Low socioeconomic status, including poverty, lack of education, and other factors are strong influences on health. Wisconsin hospitals are dedicating resources and developing programs to address these issues and improve the health status of those individuals that often cannot access even basic health services.

Help and hope when it's needed most

Life became very complicated when Sheryl Luedtke's breast cancer spread nearly four years after her diagnosis. Within months the 54-year-old was unable to work so she lost her job and with it – her insurance.

The Arimidex prescription for the breast cancer that had cost her \$35 a month would now be \$370 a month, and the other bills just never stopped coming. "My jaw dropped when I learned what the cost would be," Sheryl shared. "I had another year to go on the medication. This was such a strain on us financially."

Then she learned about the Hope Fund at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare - All Saints in Racine, which is funded in part by a \$30,000 grant from the Milwaukee Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Designed to support those diagnosed with cancer, the Hope Fund will help to offset expenses not supported by existing benefit programs. The Hope Fund is now helping Sheryl with expenses such as utility bills, grocery and gas cards, and homeowners' insurance up to \$2,000.

Individuals diagnosed with cancer are often forced to decide between taking time from work to receive the medical treatment they so desperately need and continuing to work to put food on the table. They may have to decide between paying the rent or mortgage, the utility bill or buying gas for the car and paying for their treatment. For many who teeter so close to the financial edge, the decision to "put family first" is often the decision made, thus foregoing or delaying treatment in order to meet living expenses. All Saints' Hope Fund was established so no cancer patient has to make this type of decision.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure raises funds for national breast cancer research and programs in eight Southeast Wisconsin counties that provide education, screening and help during treatment for underserved women.

"I'd never had to ask for help before – I'd been working since I was 16 – but without this program to help with those bills, I wouldn't have been able to pay for my breast cancer medication," Sheryl commented. Though she now has insurance through Medicaid, the Hope Fund has helped keep the Luedtkes financially afloat during rough financial challenges.

Sheryl is currently receiving chemotherapy treatment four days a week and needs morphine for her pain. Still, she remains positive, "It's heartening to know that there are people who don't even know me but care enough to give."

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare - All Saints, Racine



Sheryl Luedtke

Helping un- and under-insured women through free mammogram program

Findings of the Community Profile conducted by the Milwaukee Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure® – research underwritten by Aurora Health Care – reveal that women are putting off needed preventive breast cancer screenings due to economic hardships and changing health insurance plans with high deductible insurance and high co-pays.

The free mammogram program at Aurora Lakeland Medical Center was established in 2004 to support preventive breast screening for women who have no insurance or the kind of plans with high deductibles and co-pays. Eligibility for these free services is based on proof of income and completion of a simple one-page form, and costs are funded through the Aurora Foundation, which is supported by a combination of employee and community donations. The hospital's breast care coordinators participate in community outreach events and distribute flyers to clinics and physician offices to promote availability of the program.

(continued on next page)

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

During 2008, breast care coordinators at Aurora Lakeland Medical Center assisted 46 women through the program. Thirty-four received bilateral screening mammograms, seven had unilateral diagnostic mammograms, and four women had bilateral diagnostic mammograms. Six of the women received breast ultrasounds, and four underwent additional studies.

Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn

Gaby's Story

Gaby was 34 years old when she came to Columbia St. Mary's for breast health diagnostic services. She had a lot weighing on her mind: the lumps the doctor had found on both of her breasts, how she would pay for these services, and what it meant for her chances of becoming a mother again.

She had been working closely with her doctor at Sixteenth Street Community Health Clinic as she was trying to conceive several years after the birth of her first child. Yet it was a much more difficult road than Gaby had planned; she had experienced three spontaneous abortions and was becoming depressed at the possibility that she may never have a second child. Then came the appointment at Sixteenth Street Clinic in which Dr. Laguna discovered two lumps on Gaby's right breast and one lump on the left. Time stopped; all of the effort and the hope that she had put into trying to conceive might end with these lumps, as she faced the fear that she may have breast cancer.



Financially, things looked grim because she was not eligible for any government financial assistance such as BadgerCare, and the hope of qualifying for the Wisconsin Well Woman Program was eliminated by the simple fact that she was two months short of the program's qualifying age. However, there was still hope of assistance through the Susan G. Komen for the Cure® Grant administered by Bill Solberg at Columbia St. Mary's. When a person doesn't meet the requirements of all other public financial assistance programs, the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Fund® will step in and provide the means for the screening and diagnostic services needed. Gaby was exactly the kind of woman that this grant was made for, and she got

the assistance she needed, receiving diagnostic service at Columbia St. Mary's River Woods Outpatient Center. Gaby's worries had lifted: she now had excellent, quality care without having to wonder how she would afford it. She also had the reassurance that her breast health was normal, giving her peace of mind so that she could turn her attention toward becoming a mother once again.

Columbia St. Mary's, Inc., Milwaukee

Fort HealthCare mammogram campaign targets busy, low-income women

The mammogram campaigns of 2007 and 2008 were very successful, but Fort HealthCare wanted to reach even more women over the age of 40 to get this potentially life-saving screening. Building on the previous viral campaign in which women were given MammoGRAMS (postage-paid postcards) they could send to a friend or family member, Fort HealthCare executed a multi-channel, interactive 2009 Mother's Day campaign of e-marketing (internal and purchased target lists) and web marketing, supported by public relations, to reach women in its service area.

Through a partnership with the Fort Memorial Hospital Foundation and the Rock River Free Clinic, women with little or no insurance received vouchers for free mammograms, 72 of which have been redeemed to date. The organization also made a concerted effort to reach its Hispanic population with bilingual posters at area restaurants, grocery stores, Literacy Plus offices, and through the Spanish language newsletter, Conexiones.

The www.FortHealthCare.com mammography microsite, which allowed women to request an appointment online and find answers to their most frequently asked questions, was ranked the number one health information page on the Web site in May 2009 (trailing only employment in unique visitor traffic). More than 350 women received mammograms during the entire campaign. Even better, one out of every seven mammography patients who scheduled appointments were new to the program.

Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

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.