

# 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.

#### **Dia de la Mujer Latina**

Under the direction of Dr. Judy Tjoe, Medical Director of Aurora's Comprehensive Breast Care Centers, a team of Aurora physicians completed a record 98 free clinical breast exams at the 2nd Annual Dia de la Mujer Latina event on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2008 at Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic. As Dr. Tjoe explains:

For underserved minorities who have limited resources for preventive health care, basic clinical breast exams and annual screening mammography are low on their priority lists. Misleading cultural beliefs and language barriers compound the problem.

Yet, with the help of Aurora medical residents and nurses, we provided education, clinical breast exams and access to grant-funded programs offering affordable screening mammography and referrals for care, thus achieving three goals:

- Providing women the opportunity for early breast cancer detection, which translates to improved individual survival;
- Responsibly allocating our community's fiscal resources, since costs associated with screening are far less than the costs associated with treatment of late-stage disease;
- Teaching our next generation of physicians the importance of community service and patient education, the latter necessary to promote improved overall health.

In translation, Dia de la Mujer Latina means "Day of the Latin Woman." To celebrate and support Latinas who are at the center of their families' health and well being, multiple community partners came together to provide a variety of health screenings, health education, food, fun and entertainment for the whole family.

Months of work and planning on the part of a coalition of local providers make Dia de la Mujer Latina possible. In addition to Dr. Tjoe and her team and Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic, those partners were the American Cancer Society, Wisconsin Well Woman Program Southeast Wisconsin, Wheaton's Su Salud Breast Health Program, and CORE/EI Centro, an Aurora-supported health and wellness center. Also participating in the planning and providing follow-up services were Planned Parenthood, Milwaukee Health Services, Sixteenth Street Community Clinic.

**Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee**

#### **Maria was anxious and frightened**

The challenging economy in 2009 has resulted in increased unemployment and loss of health insurance throughout many households in the Green Bay area. The Hispanic population in Green Bay was especially hard hit. The Hispanic Health Educator at St. Mary's, Carol Ponce, has provided health care information, support and resources to help this population.

St. Mary's Hospital has been a recipient of The Heritage Grant, which provides funding for preventive screenings for those who do not have health insurance or who are underinsured. In the first month of 2009, the number of people seeking Reproductive Cancer Screenings doubled from the previous year.

One of those patients is Maria, a young mother of two, who came in for a routine pap smear. The results showed abnormal cells and severe dysplasia. Maria did not know what that meant, but she knew paying for further treatment would be a problem as she and her husband were both cut back to part-time in their jobs. Maria was told she needed a biopsy and then a colposcopy. She was upset and anxious as she had no idea what those procedures were or who to go to about making arrangements.

When Carol met with Maria they both found the diagrams and visual aids in the tutorial helped greatly in understanding dysplasia. Next, they reviewed the tutorial for the colposcopy procedure that would be necessary following

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## **Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)**

the test; and Carol sensed Maria also needed emotional support. After the tutorial, Carol gave Maria some inspirational readings plus a printed prayer in Spanish and spent time reassuring her. Carol helped Maria arrange an appointment with a physician at Prevea Health. At last, Maria was connected with a physician who could arrange for the test and procedure. Carol spent time teaching Maria to advocate for herself; to ask the doctor the right questions when she had her next visit.

Carol continues to check on Maria and helped her establish a flexible payment arrangement with Prevea as she moved through her treatment. If this program was not in place, Maria might not have even come in for the screening. Because her dysplasia was caught early, she was able to seek treatment that was less severe and therefore less costly for her. Maria also had her mind eased and felt less stressed knowing there was a way to get through it all.

**St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay**

### **Hispanic Health Fair**

Hundreds of people from an East Side Green Bay neighborhood came to learn about their health at the first Atonement Lutheran Church Health Fair where sister hospitals St. Vincent and St. Mary's hospitals sent staffers to tout breast health, Hispanic childbirth education, protection from skin cancer and more. Health fair visitors from a nearby Hispanic neighborhood took home sun screen lotion, information about upcoming childbirth classes and cancer prevention tips.

**St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay**

### **Aurora and N.E.W. Community Clinic in Brown County**

The mission of the Northeast Wisconsin (N.E.W.) Community Clinic is to provide access to care for the low-income and uninsured population. Through this program, Aurora Physician Yolo Diaz, M.D., provides pediatric care to low-income and uninsured children from Brown County. She works in a converted gym locker room at Nicolet Elementary School in Green Bay and helps children with checkups, asthma, depression and other ailments. She works at the clinic part-time between four and five days per week, totaling about 25 hours per week. From July 2008 to June 2009, Dr. Diaz saw 496 uninsured and low-income students. According to results from post-visit surveys, 100 percent of the patients said Dr. Diaz met their immediate health care need and otherwise would have had to visit an emergency room. About 99 percent of the patients were Hispanic. Dr. Diaz partners with various agencies such as Women Infants and Children program, Brown County Health Department, Head Start and the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation.

**Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay**

### **A Woman's Place: aerobics class offers much more than exercise**

In the Hispanic culture, family, friends and relationships mean everything. As part of a health and wellness program for the Hispanic community, an aerobics class was begun at A Woman's Place through St. Mary's Hospital. It was soon evident, this offered much more than exercise.

#### **Luisa**

Luisa came to aerobics class at A Woman's Place to get in shape and exercise with other Hispanic women. After class the women talked about their families and what was going on in their lives. Luisa mentioned her husband had been diagnosed with psoriasis that resulted in a rash up and down his arms. She said her husband was afraid to touch their baby and to touch her because he thought it was contagious; in fact he was worried he was going to die from this rash. This was affecting their family life and even though he was receiving treatment, they did not understand about the condition.

Carol Ponce, the Hispanic Health Educator at A Woman's Place spent time with Luisa to educate her about psoriasis using a Spanish language computer tutorial program. She was able to give Luisa printed information which explained how our colder, dry climate in winter and stress can make psoriasis worse. Luisa became the communicator in her family to pass along what she learned to her husband. The couple felt relieved this treatable problem was not contagious and certainly not life threatening. By relieving their worry and stress, he was able to get better sooner and their family harmony was restored as he once again felt he could hold their baby and hug his wife. What began as an exercise class transpired into building a relationship that improved the health of Luisa's family.

#### **Raquel**

One of Raquel's friends coaxed her to attend the exercise class at A Woman's Place. It was hard for her to make the first attempt to come because she was fearful of having a panic attack. After class she started talking to others. She has children ages 7 and 5 and they seldom went outside too, because their mother was afraid all the time. Raquel expressed concern that she was ruining her children's lives because she was afraid to leave the house. Raquel's life was busy with a husband and the demands of raising a family, plus she had recently experienced two deaths in her family. She talked to

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## Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Carol Ponce, the Hispanic Health Educator at A Woman's Place and Carol connected her with a bi-lingual counselor in the community. The counselor determined Raquel was experiencing depression and anxiety related to the recent losses in her life. In addition to seeing a counselor Carol suggested she get connected to other friends and a women's group through her church. The counselor was supportive of this idea because it was also helping her recover.

After a while, Raquel stopped coming to the exercise class at a Woman's Place and her classmates were worried, so Carol called to check up on Raquel and learned she had traveled home to visit family and took her children on the trip too. She flew in an airplane that previously was frightening for her. For Raquel, it felt like a miracle to get her life back and to be connected with others again. If the exercise class had not been available, Raquel might not have gotten help and could have continued into a downward spiral.

### **Angela**

Angela is 27-years old, married and works in a meat packing plant. Her job requires heavy lifting and as a result she developed severe back pain. She went to a doctor who told her she needed an MRI, but she really could not afford it. Instead, she sought out other types of treatment, which helped a little, but the pain persisted. She was anxious and worried about the pain and how to pay for the care she needed. She heard about Carol Ponce, the Hispanic Health Educator at A Woman's Place and called her. Angela was crying with pain and had been turned away by another health care facility. Carol helped Angela get a physician appointment at the N.E.W. Community Clinic and eventually an MRI, which revealed a herniated disc in her back. Surgery was recommended which terrified Angela. She wasn't sure what to do, so she made an appointment with Carol who provided education about back problems, the herniated disc and helped Angela think of questions to ask the doctor. Carol encouraged her to ask: "Would an exercise program help?" "Were there other things she could to help ease her pain besides surgery?" "What exactly was involved in the surgery?"

The United States health care system is a mystery to those who arrive from another country. Carol helped Angela navigate our system and explained the types of care and professionals that treat patients. Carol guided her through asking good questions at her next doctor visit. After her test, Angela was relieved to learn what was causing her pain and she became a better health care consumer as she discovered treatment options as well as the risks and benefits of each. If this program were not here, she would not have known how to best use the health care system and most importantly she took steps to address her back pain before the problem grew worse.

**St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay**

***Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at [mgrasmick@wha.org](mailto:mgrasmick@wha.org).***



Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at [www.WiServePoint.org](http://www.WiServePoint.org).