

# Care, Comfort and Hope

## Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

### High Risk Sexual Behavior

The Wisconsin State Health Plan identifies the primary risks associated with unprotected sexual behaviors as unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. These health conditions significantly affect the health of the public as well as the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities. Hospitals reach out to at-risk mothers to help them have safe, healthy pregnancies and a successful transition to parenthood. Education classes supported by hospitals focus on maternal and child health issues and help connect women to the social, emotional, and health resources they need to ensure good outcomes for mother and baby.

#### Empowering moms

Meriter's Prenatal Care Coordination Program teaches moms "to fish." Just as teaching someone to fish, rather than just giving them a fish, will help them feed themselves for a long time, this program helps pregnant women at high risk for early deliveries access and utilize the support and services they need to have healthy babies.

"We teach women how to advocate for themselves," says Krystal Wages, who along with Susan Lee, coordinate care for over 100 women a year. "Our goal is to foster independence."

In addition to health issues, many women served by this program have lives complicated by unstable home, economic and social concerns. Wages and Lee walk the women through the steps of exploring the housing, transportation, parenting and other resources available, helping them make the vital connections and filling out the necessary applications to ensure a more stable life for their babies. Moms also are encouraged to develop healthy habits by earning incentives for baby supplies through the Angelica's Child program.

As an indication of the success of Meriter's program, a recent state study highlighted the low rate of low-birth weight babies in Dane County and research is underway to duplicate the results here to other parts of the state.

"We are proud of our moms and the steps they take to give their babies a healthy start," says Wages.

**Meriter Hospital, Madison**

#### The Prodigal Daughter Returns

*By Julia Means, CSM parish nurse*

We serve many young women through the Blanket of Love prenatal education and support program. Increasingly, the young women who participate are from long-term poverty and often have learning disabilities. Cherry was one such 19-year-old who came to us with little family support. Her mother died two years ago, and she had no contact with her own father. The father of her baby was involved with her and promised to be supportive.

Because of her learning disability and low literacy level, we needed to connect her to an especially attentive physician and had to accompany her to many appointments. She was helped with WIC nutrition eligibility and housing and was given much emotional support from me and the pregnant girls who are also helped by the Blanket of Love.

One day, Cherry called and told me that she and her boyfriend were moving to be with his family in Mississippi. I told her I thought that was a bad idea since she had everything well set-up for the completion of her prenatal care with a good MD in Milwaukee. The pull of love was too strong, however, and she left with him for the South.

A week later, I received a call from her from a shelter in Mississippi. She had been beaten by her boyfriend and sought refuge in a domestic violence shelter. She wanted my help to return home. I was able to contact her county case worker

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## Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

who was still active on the case and arranged for train fare. I met Cherry at the train station and helped her to get home. At our next meeting, the other girls in Blanket of Love were very forgiving and welcomed her back to the group with open arms. Their love and support is a real service to Cherry and her soon-to-be-born baby.

**Columbia St. Mary's, Inc., Milwaukee**

### Program assists teen moms in western Racine County

The Western Racine County Health Department, which is part of Aurora Memorial Hospital of Burlington, recently developed a new program called Club ABC to help address a growing health care need in the community.

According to Cheryl Mazmanian, director, Western Racine County Health Department, the area is seeing a higher incidence of teen pregnancy after years of decline. She said the trend reflects national numbers that show increases in teen pregnancy.

Club ABC is a group of pregnant or parenting teen girls, age 18 and under. The purpose of the group, which meets monthly, is to discuss parenting issues, provide support, and help build brighter futures for moms and their children. Currently, the program serves between 10 and 15 girls in western Racine County. Partial funding for the program comes from the United Way of Racine County.

"This is a high risk group and we share information critical to their overall health and well being, including immunization, nutrition, and developing parenting skills," Mazmanian said. "Other focus areas include making sure they do not get pregnant again and stay in school."

Mazmanian said without this program, there would be no way to provide the type of high intensity interventions necessary in these cases. She said it's difficult to connect with the teen moms because they are in school or working at jobs.

**Aurora Memorial Hospital of Burlington**

### "Who do I call, where do I go, what do I do?"

Alison Krings was pregnant with her first child. She had been diagnosed with a high-risk pregnancy and put on bed rest. Then, at seven and a half months, she lost her job as a restaurant manager, which also cost the mother-to-be her health insurance, and the chance to continue seeing her primary obstetrician.

"All I could think was, 'I've never done this before. Who do I call, where do I go, what do I do?'" recalls Alison.

When Allison relayed her predicament to her high risk pregnancy specialist at Wheaton Franciscan, she was immediately connected with a financial counselor. By the end of the day, Alison and her baby had coverage once again. Wheaton financial counselors are experts at helping individuals and families navigate and interpret the numerous coverage options available to them. In Alison's case, she qualified for BadgerCare, Wisconsin's Title 19 program. They also connected her with the team at the St. Joseph Women's Outpatient Center, which provides prenatal care and other women's services.

"To have insurance available to you and to have people supporting you through that time is unbelievable," says Alison. "It makes you reassured to know there is someone out there helping you."

**Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, Milwaukee**

### High-level prenatal care for pregnant teens at Milwaukee's North Division High

Milwaukee's high teen pregnancy rate carries with it numerous problems, including premature births and high infant mortality rates. Recognizing the risks, and in an attempt to empower the mothers as well as focus on birth outcomes, the Aurora Midwifery and Wellness Center and a pediatric nurse practitioner from Aurora's School-Based Health program joined to bring a unique program to pregnant teens at North Division High School.

The Centering Pregnancy® Group Prenatal Care program is the only one of its kind in the area, and possibly the state. Teens meet for two hours at the end of the school day, every other week for 10 weeks, to learn in detail about pregnancy, nutrition and childbirth, and to receive support from each other as well as from trained health care workers. To encourage bonding, the teens also perform minor health checks such as blood pressure and weight readings on each other.

While they meet in the school's basement, the atmosphere is one of peace and sharing. Lights are low and music plays quietly. The floor is covered with a soft rug, and the air is diffused with the scent of essential oils. Healthy snacks, from juice to granola bars, are provided. The program's creators, Midwife Eileen Nyholt, BSN, CNM, and Nurse Practitioner Vikky Carlson-Oehlers, MSN, RN, CPNP, hope to expand it to other schools.

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*Allison Krings and Dr. Kreeger*

## Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

“We want these young women to become the best moms they can be, to advocate for their babies and to get the best health care possible for themselves,” Eileen said.

“Kids from urban settings, where there’s a lot of poverty, want to be cared for,” Vikky said. “For some of them, this may be the first time in their lives they get this kind of one-on-one attention. They don’t know there’s a healthier way to live.”

Outside speakers are brought in through the assistance of Susan Belanger, a community health worker with Aurora’s School Based Health program who also assists with activities and creates the peaceful atmosphere.

In addition to talks about labor, nutrition, exercising safely, newborn care and safety issues, the program includes information on birth control and domestic abuse.

“The idea is, take control of your body and your life. We can celebrate this pregnancy, but let’s plan for the future,” Eileen said. “We hope they can start making informed decisions, become empowered and become better mothers.”

**Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee**

### **Shaken Baby Syndrome: Aurora partners with Walworth County**

As any new parent can attest, the first few weeks of parenthood can quickly turn from excitement and joy to stress, fatigue and exhaustion when babies cry. The stress of hearing a baby continually cry can drive some exhausted new parents to behave irrationally. Sadly, according to estimates from the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, an estimated 1,300 infants in the United States are hospitalized or die from shaken baby syndrome each year. One in four babies die as a result of their injuries, and among those who survive, approximately 80 percent suffer brain injury, blindness and deafness, fractures, paralysis, cognitive and learning disabilities, or cerebral palsy.

Statistics from Walworth County Health and Human Services show that Walworth County recorded six cases of shaken baby syndrome between October 2007-January 2009. Deborah McDaniel, a county social worker, said the number of shaken baby cases in Walworth County is disturbing and added that it can occur in any family, regardless of income or education levels. She said the difficult economy is one of the primary factors driving these cases in Walworth County.

“Job losses and concerns about the economy add another level of stress to new families who may be struggling,” she said. “What we hope to do is provide these parents with the information and education they need to cope. There is no reason for shaking a baby. Six cases are six cases too many.”

In response, Aurora Lakeland Medical Center is partnering with Walworth County Health and Human Services to provide information and education to address this issue. Now, all families who deliver a baby at Aurora Lakeland Medical Center –regardless of their financial status – receive information developed by the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome called “The Period of Purple Crying.” The educational materials, which include a DVD and brochure, were made possible by funds donated by Aurora Lakeland Medical Center caregivers.

Dawn Haxton, registered nurse and manager of women and infant care services at Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, explains: “The program helps parents and caregivers understand the aspects of crying that can trigger the kind of irrationality that can lead to shaking or abuse. If new parents better understand this normal early crying period and know the strategies they need to employ to keep their poise and composure, they are less likely to feel stressed to the point where they shake their baby out of frustration or anger.”

“The Period of Purple Crying,” which is also available in Spanish, is approved by pediatricians, public health nurses, child development experts and parents. It also provides suggestions for what to do for inconsolable crying.

**Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn**

### **Aurora BayCare Medical Center support for Adolescent Parenting Coalition**

Addressing community challenges associated with teen pregnancy is best achieved when the capacity of multiple community stakeholders working together is supported and strengthened.

For three years Aurora Health Care has sponsored a physician recital to raise money for the Adolescent Parenting Coalition, Inc. This nonprofit organization consists of a group of citizens, benefactors, legislators, service providers and businesspersons whose mission is to prevent teen pregnancy through education and awareness, but also to enhance the ability of teen parents to successfully raise their children and serve as a voice for educating the community on issues of teen pregnancy and parenting.

The physician recital featured solo performances by Aurora physicians and raised more than \$20,000 in 2008 alone, bringing Aurora’s three-year fundraising total to more than \$50,000.

**Aurora BayCare 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).