

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Access to Primary and Preventive Health Services

Hospitals do what they can to move health care services out of the clinical setting into the heart of the community. Community health screenings and education classes help raise awareness of small, and sometimes, large steps that individuals can take to improve their health. When people learn more about how their lifestyle decisions affect their health, they make changes that ultimately lead to better health, which raises the health status of the entire community.

Diabetes Fair drew large crowd

Nearly 80 people with diabetes, their family members and the public attended the annual Diabetes Fair on Saturday morning, November 7 at the Holiday Inn Express in Black River Falls. The event featured speakers, displays with diabetes educational information and supplies, blood sugar testing, door prizes and refreshments. In addition, diabetes educators were available throughout the morning to answer questions. There was no cost to attend.

Planning Committee member and Black River Memorial Hospital's dietitian Angie Kohlwey, RD, CD said the Diabetes Fair teaches people with diabetes how to take charge of their care and control their blood sugar levels.

Presentations were given on "Smart Steps to Weight Loss Success," "Life with Diabetes – The Choices We Make," and "Exercise and Diabetes – What to Watch Out For – Exercise is for Everyone." Between the presentations, participants had the opportunity to visit the displays, talk with diabetes educators and enjoy refreshments.

The Diabetes Fair is held annually and is sponsored by Black River Memorial Hospital, Krohn Clinic, Ho-Chunk Nation Health Department, and the Jackson County Public Health Department.

Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls

Fort HealthCare tackles diabetes with free classes and screenings

Fort HealthCare nurses, physicians and staff from all departments work diligently to not only provide exceptional care to our patients, but also contribute selflessly to a variety of community causes and events. One such activity is the diabetic education program.

Effective treatment of diabetes must include self-management education. Ensuring high quality education for patient self-care is one of the primary goals of Fort HealthCare's Diabetes Education program.

Rhonda Perdelwitz, RN, the diabetes education coordinator for Fort HealthCare, states, "It is our goal to make sure people receive the best possible care, and that includes making sure the community is informed about ways to maintain good, long-term health for themselves and their families. We hope to raise awareness about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and how to manage diabetes in the safest way possible."

Many people are not aware that they have diabetes and may first learn of it when they are treated for one of its life-threatening complications including heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, nerve disease or amputation.

The Fort HealthCare Diabetes Education Department offers a number of free services to the community including a bi-monthly Diabetic Education Series featuring open discussion and an educational presentation, free blood glucose meters and meter reading instruction, educational programs at area schools, free diabetic education information at community health fairs request, and improved access to diabetic education materials for the growing Hispanic community in the area.

The number of cases of diabetes diagnosed each year is increasing, and the Fort HealthCare Diabetes Education Department strives to teach the community that many simple lifestyle changes can make living with diabetes more manageable, or greatly reduce the risk of ever being diagnosed with it. The Diabetic Education program educates dozens of people every week regarding healthful food choices, lifestyle habits, and the importance of physical activity in daily life.

Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

(continued on next page)

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Free diabetes self-care class helps patients control the disease

A free “Diabetes Self-Care: Coaching Series” to help those who are either newly diagnosed with diabetes, have been diabetic for many years or just want to prevent the disease was offered by Luther Midelfort Northland in Rice Lake starting in November 2009.

Once each month for seven months, one self-care behavior was discussed, and participants developed individual action plans. Presenters include Clare Janty, physician assistant and master certified life coach, and Louise Wanner, RN, diabetes educator. Sessions covered setting the stage, self-care, monitoring, diary keeping, seven self-care behaviors, what people with diabetes want their care provider to know, healthy eating, fats, carbohydrates, calorie or carbohydrate counting, attitude, being active, communication, taking medication, reducing risks, risk tolerance, decision making, problem solving, stress management, relationships, fears, healthy coping and establishing balance. Participants could attend one, several or the entire series.

“One of my patients who took the class was able to get off of her diabetes medications and is now just diet controlled,” explained Janty. “She lost over 25 pounds. And, even though she has fibromyalgia, she created an exercise routine that worked for her. Wow!”

“I think the participants learned tremendously from each other, got suggestions, and did monthly experiments in taking baby steps towards better control,” she added.

Luther Midelfort Northland - Mayo Health System, Barron

“Great news” from diabetes patient

The goal of the Richland Hospital Diabetes Education program is to empower individuals and families dealing with this chronic illness. By giving them the knowledge and skills, the Richland Hospital diabetes educators hope that diabetics will better understand the importance of making informed choices and changing the way they are living so that they can control the disease instead of the disease controlling them.

The free monthly diabetes support group meetings play a big part in patients learning to cope with the disease. Talking with others who are traveling down a similar road helps individuals navigate pot holes and unexpected curves. Sharing ideas and successes as well as trouble spots helps everyone.

Success ultimately depends on the individual. In attaining their own treatment goals and maintaining good health, they will ultimately reduce the risk of complications that may develop.

Following is an email message to the Richland Hospital’s Certified Diabetes Educators from a patient who found success.

“Hi to you both. I have meaning to let you know the great news. I was back to see my doctor for my three-month recheck. My A1C level was 5.7, down from 7.5. And, my weight was 189 pounds, down from 215 pounds. I feel I owe you both for the change in my health. The combination of the diabetic training and my diet and exercise program is working great. I am also off the Metformin. I hope my next recheck is just as good. I’ll be sure to keep you both posted. Again thanks and have a wonderful Christmas.”

The Richland Hospital, Richland Center

Upland Hills Health sponsoring diabetes education at Grace Lutheran Church

Seniors that attended the SUN (Seniors United for Nutrition) program at Grace Lutheran Church on August 13 got a dose of education along with their meal. The Diabetes Self Management Education Program at Upland Hills Health sponsored a session focusing on diabetes prevention education.

Those who arrived early at 11:30 am had the opportunity to have their blood glucose levels screened, and blood pressure checks were available after the session. Attendees learned how to help prevent diabetes by having their blood sugars tested and understanding the right mix of diet and exercise. Those who have already been diagnosed with diabetes also learned ways to better control the disease.

Diabetes affects 1 out of 10 people in the United States, with many diabetics unaware of their health condition. If current trends continue, one out of every three Americans born today will be diagnosed with diabetes in their lifetimes.

Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

Helping diabetics take control of the disease

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that more than 20 million Americans have diabetes – six million of whom are unaware they have the disease. The American Diabetes Association recommends that, in general, people with diabetes should initially strive for an A1C (a test that assesses blood glucose levels over a two- to three-month period) that is less than seven percent.

(continued on next page)

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Alarming, more than 50 percent of diabetes patients are not in control of the disease. Even worse, a 2005 survey commissioned by the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists found that 84 percent of type 2 diabetes patients surveyed believed they were doing a good job controlling their blood sugar even though 61 percent went on to say they did not know what an A1C test is.

Westfields Hospital conducts a monthly diabetic education and support group which invites guest speakers to help educate those with diabetes about the importance of knowing their risk factors and taking action to control the disease. One program in particular featured a Wisconsin resident who has diabetes and is an A1C Champion who shared his personal experiences and helpful insights on successfully managing diabetes. Several in attendance had never heard of A1C and were motivated to learn more.

Other topics presented throughout the year included stress and diabetes, cooking for the holidays, eye care, diabetes and dementia just to list a few. Sessions are free and open to the public.

“Those people who maintain control reduce their risk for complications of the disease which often can result in hospitalization and reduced quality of life,” says registered dietitian Linda Stefonek, facilitator for the program. “That’s why I’m passionate about offering free education and support to help improve the health of those in our community.”

Westfields Hospital, New Richmond

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.