

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.

Almost off the charts

In the summer of 2007, Joseph Filas, 76, of Westboro, began noticing that his legs felt heavier than usual and that they were feeling uncomfortably cold at night. He was concerned, but thought he was just experiencing side effects of aging. After all, he was having a check-up every six months following a pacemaker implant and his exams showed nothing out of the ordinary.

On Thursday, October 30, 2008, Filas and some friends attended the Senior Health, Wellness & Safety Fair co-sponsored by the Taylor County Commission on Aging and the Kraft Pizza Company. The event included a number of presentations and health screenings, including a FREE blood glucose screening by Memorial Health Center.

"I figured I'd just go to see what's going on and I saw Memorial Health Center was having a diabetes check, so I figured that I might as well do that," Filas says. "I'm glad I did."

When Odessa Syryczuk, Memorial Health Center registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator, tested Filas' blood glucose level, she discovered it was extremely high.

"My results were higher than heck, off the charts almost," he says. "[Syryczuk] told me results that high were a big deal and that I might even need insulin. I kind of believed it, so I went to the doctor right after."

Filas left the health fair and immediately drove to Memorial Health Center's satellite clinic in Rib Lake where it was confirmed he had diabetes.

"They gave me insulin and pills right away," he says. "The people at the clinic worked fast. I had good connections, I guess. That, or I was really bad off."

With medication and hard work, Filas is now controlling his diabetes. And, while discovering that one has a health condition is never a joy, Filas is grateful for Memorial Health Center and its free blood glucose screening.

"It's a good thing they have things like health fairs and that places like Memorial Health Center do free screenings," he said. "I didn't have any idea that I had diabetes until I had that blood check. I was under the influence of figuring that when I went for my check-ups, my blood was being checked for things like diabetes. I thought I was covered. I'm just glad Memorial Health Center was there to catch it before things got any worse."

Memorial Health Center, Medford

OLVH serves hundreds at its fourth annual Senior Week

Hundreds of local residents accessed important health and wellness screenings at Our Lady of Victory Hospital (OLVH) in Stanley during its fourth annual Senior Week, Nov. 3-7, 2008.

Nearly 800 people received flu/pneumovax vaccines; 727 people got their shot during Senior Week. Another 44 received their shots at the Victory Medical Group clinic in Owen, and 25 at the Thorp clinic.

"Seniors are such a vital part of our community. We're pleased at how this event has grown and expanded in the last four years, and are already planning what we'd like to do in 2009," said Cindy Eichman, president of OLVH.

OLVH offered the following screenings to community members with no insurance or high deductibles:

- Women's Health Screenings for women 50 and older who have not had a pap/pelvic in the last 4 years.
- Men's Prostate Cancer Screening for men 50 and older who have not had a PSA lab test in the last 4 years.
- Lung Functions Screening for men or women age 50 and older at risk for lung problems – farmers, asthmatics, smokers, ex-smokers, industrial workers.

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- Carotid Ultrasound Screening for patients 55 and older with known coronary artery disease or peripheral vascular disease, or patients 60 and older with risks of smoking, diabetes, dyslipidemia or hypertension/high blood pressure.
- Balance and Fall Prevention Screening
- Blood Pressure Screening
- Glucose Screening
- Medication List Screening and Patient Record Preparation - free medication list preparation and copies with individual folder were provided.

The hospital also offered a Wellness Education program during Senior Week. The topic, "Planning for Alternative Living Options in Retirement," was presented by Sue Hebert from the Chippewa County Aging & Disability Resource Center. Sue discussed how and when to downsize a household, future living options to consider as a person ages, and talking to one's children about planning.

Ministry Health Care – Our Lady of Victory Hospital, Stanley

Exceptional athletic trainer goes the extra mile for kids

For athletic trainers, notoriety is a catch 22. Most would rather go unnoticed on the sideline at an event or work at the school with athletes and coaches to prevent injuries. It's when the game stops and everyone holds their breath that the athletic trainer is on center stage. Richland Hospital's, Athletic Trainers Sharon Panske & Kyle Berra bring their respective schools a sigh of relief and have put the Hospital's Sports Medicine Program into the spotlight in a good way.

Debbie O'Connell is the director of rehabilitation services at the Richland Hospital and oversees the sports medicine program and Panske. "Our Sports Medicine program is a very important part of the overall care we provide to the community," O'Connell said. "School budget constraints would make it difficult, if not impossible, for schools to have athletic trainer coverage on a regular basis. It is the hospital's commitment to the community and to the partnerships with the schools that makes the services available regularly."

Heather Fitzloff is the Athletic Director at Richland Center High School (RCHS). She works very closely with Richland Hospital Athletic Trainer, Sharon Panske, ATC. She speaks highly of Panske and her relationship with the school.

"Her professionalism and passion for the safety of student-athletes goes above and beyond the call of duty. The student-athletes all like and respect Sharon, because of her gift of connecting with the students. Sharon interacts easily with students, parents and staff. She is part of our RCHS family," Fitzloff said.

Prior to each sports season, RCHS has a registration night for parents, coaches and students. Panske speaks to the entire group at these spring, fall, and winter events and outlines the services that she provides. At events, Panske is diligent in making sure she or another member of the event coverage team is on-site.

"She (Panske) often arrives 30 minutes to an hour early before practice or a home athletic event. If Sharon is not going to be able to attend an event, she makes sure she communicates with me and leaves all supplies and communication for the doctor or substitute Athletic Trainer. This is all done on hospital time," Fitzloff said. "We could not ask for a better Athletic Trainer than Sharon Panske. Our students and entire RCHS community are very fortunate to have her working with us. She is an exceptional person/professional."

The Richland Hospital, Richland Center

Gundersen Lutheran offers free sports physicals

Gundersen Lutheran Health System in La Crosse, Wis., understands that participation in school athletics builds teamwork, strategic thinking, physical fitness and many other positive attributes. They don't want to see any student miss an opportunity to participate in sports because they cannot afford the cost of a required sports physical.

That's why Gundersen Lutheran Pediatrics and Family Medicine teamed up annually to offer vouchers for students who need financial assistance to cover the cost of a sports physical not covered by insurance.

Area coaches and athletic directors are asked to help identify and discretely distribute vouchers to students who need them.

Gundersen Lutheran Health System, La Crosse

Getting your bell rung – beware of the chime!

When an athlete gets his or her bell rung, the "shake it off and play through it" mentality is wrong. Concussions for school age athletes are more serious than has been recognized in the past. Dr. Kevin Whitney is a Primary Care Physician at Richland Medical Center and Richland Hospital and is a member of the Richland Sports Medicine Concussion Clinic.

"Young brains are still developing, making them more susceptible to debilitating second concussions. When a young athlete returns to action before their brain is properly healed, a second concussion could mean permanent brain damage or even death," Whitney said.

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Richland Sports Medicine provides all athletes at the schools they cover with a free initial/baseline impact test. In fall of 2009, approximately 80 percent of our athletes completed a baseline test that was free of charge,” Panske said. “In the future, if we find that an athlete has suffered a concussion, we can administer a follow-up test to see if his or her results have changed from the baseline. If we see someone who did not have the initial baseline test, we can still compare the data to a standard measures.”

Sue Sharpe is the mother of a Richland Center High School soccer player who has benefited from the concussion clinic and ImPact testing in 2009. She said that she feels very lucky to have had her son, Kane, tested before the season began. “Now they have some data to compare,” She said. “There’s a huge difference between guessing and really having the knowledge that our kids are healed and ready to get back into the game.”

Richland Hospital, Richland Center

ImPACT concussion screening for student athletes

The Fort Memorial Hospital Foundation is supporting an initiative within local schools that provides student athletes with the opportunity to receive ImPACT concussion testing free of charge. This is the second year of funding encouraging innovative ideas from Fort HealthCare employees, and this year there was \$40,000 in grants awarded.

ImPACT testing is conducted on a computer at the beginning of a sports season and then after a concussion has been detected to aid in difficult return-to-play decisions. The test measures an athlete’s symptoms and assesses attention, memory, processing speed and reaction time. If the athlete scores the same as they did pre-season they are perceived as ready to return to the game. If they score lower than they did pre-season, the concussion is presumed to still exist and therefore it is not safe to return to play.

As more children are participating in organized athletics, concussions are becoming increasingly common. Some can even be difficult to assess, leaving an athlete at risk for multiple concussions. However, the problem occurs when a student athlete wants to return to play and tells the athletic trainer pre-maturely he/she is not having symptoms anymore.

Julie Neppi, athletic trainer and physical therapist for Fort HealthCare’s Therapy and Sport Center says, “The Fort HealthCare Foundation has given us a great opportunity to serve our high school athletes with the latest technology for the treatment and prevention of head injuries.

Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

Ministry’s Sports Medicine offers on-site concussion testing

ImPACT (Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing), a computer-based program that tests the cognitive ability of the brain, is offered free to local student athletes by Ministry Health Care’s Point Sports Medicine Center. ImPACT, uses a series of tests done by the athlete to obtain baseline cognitive data (working memory, sustained and selective attention time, response variability, non-verbal problem solving and reaction time) which is referenced after the athlete sustains a head injury. Results provide specific information regarding the severity of injury and a standard for evaluating recovery from injury.

It is estimated that approximately 1,450 local high school and junior high school aged athletes would reap the positive health benefits from ImPACT provided by Ministry’s Point Sports Medicine Center if they all participated.

“We are excited about being able to offer ImPACT in addition to our other on-the-field services we provide to local athletes,” stated Dr. Dan Kraeger, sports medicine specialist for Ministry Health Care’s Point Sport Medicine Center. “We believe in the importance of obtaining this information and hope that schools agree to provide this testing for all athletes involved in contact sports.”

Concussions are very common in high school athletics and many times the criteria to return athletes to the game are not objective enough. The long-term consequences of returning to play too soon and sustaining additional damage to the brain can be life-long and very debilitating. ImPACT testing can be done ahead of time and used as a comparison reference after an injury to determine if the brain is still impaired.

Ministry Saint Michael’s Hospital, Ministry Medial Group, Stevens Point

Diabetes education group gives community long-term support

Needles, blood sugar, diets, insulin. Diabetes is a chronic, life-altering illness that can be scary and confusing. And, according to the American Diabetes Association 1.6 million people 20 years and older are diagnosed each year.

That’s why Riverside Medical Center (RMC) in Waupaca has continued to expand its community-based Diabetes Education Group. Since its inception 15 years ago, the ThedaCare program has given people diagnosed with diabetes a place to learn about their illness and how to manage it, and connect with other diabetics.

“A lot of what they need to do to keep their diabetes in control depends on their lifestyle, taking medications and insulin,” said Marci Reynolds, RN and certified diabetes educator with RMC. “It’s really a hassle to have diabetes, and they need a lot of support.”

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The diabetes support group meets three times each in the fall and spring and features topics that boil down to healthy living — including speakers, T'ai Chi classes and supermarket tours to help diabetics shop more healthfully. All classes are free to participants.

The supermarket tour is a new addition and proved immensely popular its first session. Group members met a dietician there, and she helped them read labels and talked about recipes. “We had 20-some people show up, and they kept her there for more than three hours,” Reynolds said.

The program’s presence in Waupaca is vital also because of a strong tendency for crossover between diabetes and other chronic illness like heart disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol. Its popularity continues to rise. “Research is showing the best support is each other, which is why our support group is so important to people,” Reynolds said.

Riverside Medical Center, Waupaca

Flambeau Hospital begins series of “Health Talks”

Starting monthly in 2010, Flambeau Hospital began a series of Health Talks. Sessions are held in Park Falls and Phillips, giving people in the community two different days and locations to attend the free monthly educational series.

“The mission of Flambeau Hospital is to create healthier communities while improving the health and well being of the people. These health talks are one more way we can accomplish our mission,” stated David Grundstrom, chief administrative officer of Flambeau Hospital.

Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

Clergy Health Fair

St. Nicholas Hospital held its annual Clergy Health Fair on October 30. All area clergy were invited to attend to learn more about health issues and receive a variety of free health screenings such as blood pressure and cholesterol. Flu shots and a health risk appraisal questionnaire were also offered for free.

“This is a small token of appreciation for area clergy because of all that they have done for the Hospital,” said Susie Runaas, Community Education Lead. “It is an opportunity to provide quality health care screenings for them and give them information about the services that we have available to the community such as smoking cessation classes, diabetes and nutrition information and the Sheboygan Surgery Center.”

St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

Free health screenings and health fairs

Bellin Health routinely offers free health care services in and around the Northeastern Wisconsin and Upper Peninsula communities it serves. Doing so is part of the Green Bay-based health system’s continued focus on encouraging wellness and prevention while gradually steering patients away from predominantly reactive health care.

Between October 1, 2009 and July 27, 2010, Bellin Health offered 93 free health screenings and 23 free health fair events.

“It’s important for us to regularly offer these free services,” said Bellin Health community outreach coordinator Debbie Leoni. “Anything that gets us in front of people and helps us to share the message of preventive health care, routine checkups, proper nutrition and regular exercise is a step in the right direction.

“This doesn’t always translate to a new patient, but that’s not the goal,” Leoni said. “We do this simply to encourage people to take charge of their health. Free screenings are a great way to start teaching people how to take that first step in taking better responsibility for their health and overall well-being.”

The free health screenings, which drew 1,821 people, were held in Bellin Health Family Medical Centers across Northeast Wisconsin. They featured a wide variety of tests, including screenings for: Glucose (diabetes); vein; skin; hernia; blood pressure; heart health; osteoporosis; peripheral arterial disease; and balance and dizziness issues.

The free screenings are valued at about \$36,400.

The free health fair events offered the same preventative tests as the free health screenings but were held in venues like Green Bay-area businesses, schools and sports arenas. The health fairs drew 2,414 people between fall of 2009 and summer of 2010.

The 23 health fairs have an estimated value of \$36,200.

Bellin Health, Green Bay

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.