

# Care, Comfort and Hope

## Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

### Healthy Growth and Development

Early growth and development have a profound effect on health across the life span. Developmental disabilities can often be mitigated if they are detected early. Every week in Wisconsin almost 100 infants are born with low birth weight, and about six percent of those will die before their first birthday. Hospitals are striving to decrease infant mortality by providing pre-conception and inter-conception care to those affected by poor birth outcomes.

#### ***Classes promote language and social development***

Vernon Memorial Healthcare offers several programs that promote early language and social development for babies and at-risk parents. New Baby, Parent Tot Preschool and Parent Tot Water classes are taught in six-week sessions by experienced health educators.

The New Baby Class provides early socialization opportunities for infants less than 12 months of age. The class also provides an opportunity for parents to share stories and discuss topics including sleep patterns, breastfeeding, SIDS prevention, immunizations and developmental milestones.

Parent Tot Preschool provides toddlers up to three-and-one-half years of age with opportunities to learn, play and grow with peers and parents. Children join a parent or caregiver in activities that develop language, fine motor skills, creative and expressive thinking and early literacy. Children play, sing, dance, read, listen, share and craft while learning these valuable skills.

Parent Tot Water Class helps children ages six months to three years develop strength, coordination and confidence in the water. The class is held in Vernon Memorial's warm water therapy pool. This is not a swimming lesson. The class encourages parent interaction with the child and focuses on mutual enjoyment. One parent in this class said, "We experienced just the right amount of structure to allow our boys to gain the independence in the water that they needed."

**Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua**

#### ***Baby Basics and Beyond***

Baby Basics and Beyond, a community-based educational event for expectant parents and parents of young children, also is an invaluable learning experience for the young women enrolled in the School-Age Parent Program in the West Allis/West Milwaukee School District. The goal of the School-Age Parent Program is for the students to continue their education and graduate from high school. Participating in preparations for the Baby Basics and Beyond community event is part of the skill-building training within their curriculum.

Students research topics related to child and maternal health, such as the effects of pre- and post-pregnancy smoking, drugs, alcohol and diet, as well as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, safe sleep and car-seat safety, to name a few. They are responsible for how the information is displayed and presented to the public.

Throughout the course of the school year, the hospital's clinical providers participate in the educational components of the program. The community education coordinator directs and oversees production, creative services, event-planning and oversight for Baby Basics and Beyond, working with students to further coordinate the involvement of important community agencies, such as the West Allis Fire Department and Safe Kids Coalition.

More than 150 community members attended Baby Basics and Beyond in 2010. Educational offerings included baby nutrition, sleep and crying; lead poisoning; nine steps for more effective parenting, dental care and Ask The Experts, staffed by Aurora physicians. Complementing these offerings were educational exhibits on poison safety; smoking hazards; breastfeeding; car seat safety; postpartum depression and stress; SIDS; asthma; grandparenting, and Ask The Experts.

Students in the School-Age Parent Program acquire the knowledge they need to be confident and successful parents, and in the process gain work experience and skills they can present to prospective employers so that they can support themselves and their babies.

**Aurora West Allis Medical Center**  
*(continued on next page)*

## Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

### ***Women's Outpatient Center makes all the difference for young mother***

Lakisha Stinson knows all too well the devastating effects of premature birth. Her first child, Kelviana, was born at 26 weeks and weighed just 1 pound, 15 oz.

Kelviana spent most of her short life in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Wheaton Franciscan – St. Joseph. Her preterm birth had caused numerous complications. She died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome at 8 months.

Kelviana's death took a toll on Lakisha. She battled depression and other issues. So, several years later when she found herself pregnant again, Lakisha was scared. "I didn't want to deal with what happened with my first baby," she recalled.

Lakisha was referred to the Women's Outpatient Center at St. Joseph where she met Mary Mazul, a certified nurse wife, who worked with her throughout her pregnancy.

"The people at the Women's Outpatient Center really helped," said Lakisha, who is now the proud mother of a healthy baby girl named Rashya. "Mary told me everything would be ok. I trusted her and believed her."

Recognized nationally for its clinical excellence and customer care, the Women's Outpatient Center provides a wide range of services from general wellness checks and screenings to advanced treatments for a variety of conditions. It also provides the emotional support its clients need.

The center also operates the Stork's Nest program which encourages women to embrace strong perinatal care for their babies and offers incentives for women to make and keep medical appointments.

The Women's Outpatient Center was able to provide many services to Lakisha. She was enrolled in the center's Prenatal Care Program which provides education to expectant mothers on the importance of prenatal care. She also received help with smoking cessation. Counselors put Lakisha in touch with state resources to help with her financial needs; and she received therapy to help her deal with her depression. Lakisha took a car seat class offered by the center, which qualified her for a free car seat. And she received a free Pack 'N Play portable crib through the Safe Sleep program at St. Joseph to ensure her child would have a safe place to sleep.

The Women's Outpatient Center has helped hundreds of women like Lakisha as it works to stem the rate of infant mortality in the City of Milwaukee.

**Wheaton Franciscan – St. Joseph, Milwaukee**

### ***Teen support - Lincoln High School in Manitowoc County***

For a young woman in Manitowoc County, two red strips on a pregnancy test indicate that she is pregnant. Her teenage years crumble right before her eyes as she comprehends that her life is going to change dramatically.

This is a typical flashback for many pregnant teens who attend the Teen Support program offered at the Lincoln High School in Manitowoc County.

Ashley Beeman, obstetrical nurse at Aurora Medical Center in Two Rivers, teaches prenatal and post delivery education in the Teen Support program once a week during each school semester. Students easily relate to Ashley because she was once a teen mother who attended the Teen Support program and found it so beneficial that she made it a priority to one day return and give back to the program.

"At the beginning of the class, I make it a point to share the emotions I went through as a teen mom," Ashley explains. "I find it much easier for the students to open up once I share my personal experiences with them."

The Teen Support program is a collaboration of Aurora Medical Center in Two Rivers, Early Head Start, and Lincoln High School to provide prenatal, labor, post-delivery and life skills education to students who are pregnant.

Each year a teen mom who recently graduated from the class also returns as a guest speaker to provide encouragement, support and inspiration to the young women. Ashley noted, "That way the students are not always hearing advice from the adults. It's more of a give and take amongst their peers."

Understanding cultural diversity also is a key part of Ashley's job. "I had a Hmong student who was married at the age of 17. She told me that she wanted to become pregnant and needed advice. She asked many questions on how to conceive," Ashley explained. "I discovered that in the Hmong culture, girls marry at a very young age in order to have lots of children to satisfy the expectations of their husbands' families to keep their clan names growing. Some of the stress was relieved when the young woman became pregnant."

"This is a great class for those who want to participate, although the students have the option to decline it. The young women make friends as they go through the stages of their pregnancies together. They become better mothers, and they gain a support network to help them through their transition to motherhood and responsibility," said Ashley.

**Aurora Medical Center in Two Rivers**

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



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