Froedtert Health Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls
“The Outreach Clinic helped me turn my life around.”

Ryan Lundgren has struggled with chronic health problems much of his life. By his mid-30’s he had already faced complications from uncontrolled diabetes, retinal bleeding, partial toe amputation, bone infections, a broken shoulder – “I lost two of my last three jobs because of my illnesses.” Ryan says his “wake-up call” was a heart attack in May 2011. He knew he needed to make drastic changes, but without a job or health insurance, he didn’t know where to start. “I didn’t have the information or motivation to do it on my own. I felt like giving up and accepting that I wasn’t going to live much longer.”

Ryan got the help he needed at Froedtert Health Community Memorial Hospital’s Community Outreach Health Clinic. The team of nurse practitioners, student nurses and volunteers takes a wholistic approach, which is just what Ryan needed to deal with his many interrelated health conditions. “(nurse practitioners) Linda, Jen and (volunteer nurse) Anita really worked to help me get better so I wouldn’t need to come to the Clinic every week,” says Ryan. They arranged for eye surgeries for his retinal bleeding, which interfered with his vision and his ability to hold a job. They provided physical therapy for his shoulder injury and monitored his progress. They helped him enroll in pharmaceutical assistance programs so he could get low-cost insulin and other medications, and provided follow-up care while he recovered from his heart attack. Most important of all, they helped Ryan understand that he had choices, that his health was something he could take charge of by eating differently and becoming more active.

Today, Ryan is 100 pounds lighter, exercises regularly and says he feels great. “I used to take insulin injections four times a day; now I don’t need it at all.” He’s learned to manage his diabetes by monitoring his blood sugar levels and eating accordingly. Ryan is back at work now at a delivery job, but still with no health insurance. He comes to the Clinic now for check-ups and to reinforce his healthier habits. He can’t say enough about the “terrific people” at the Clinic. “Their support has made a major difference for me. They are there for the right reasons, to help people get well, and they made me believe I could do it.”

Outreach Clinic staff estimate that about 60 percent of Clinic patients have one or more chronic conditions, putting them at-risk for more severe health problems if left untreated. Staff not only provide immediate assistance for the patient’s presenting health concern, but work to address other health issues that have gone untreated. Many are struggling with depression, anxiety or other mental issues exacerbated by unemployment, family problems and financial stress. Patients often need help in identifying and accessing other services, obtaining referrals and follow-up care. In short, Outreach Clinic patients tend to require more time and more intensive, personalized services than insured patients whose needs are less urgent and complex.