Gundersen Lutheran Health System, La Crosse

Joining forces to ‘Shine a Light on Lung Cancer’

More than 2,000 fifth and sixth grade students in La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties received a helpful reminder of the dangers of smoking last November, thanks to Gundersen Lutheran Health System’s efforts to “Shine a Light on Lung Cancer.”

Gundersen Lutheran’s mission focuses on improving the health of the communities we serve. Knowing that lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States and is expected to grow by more than 13 percent over the next five to 10 years, Gundersen Lutheran’s Lung Cancer Task Force took action during National Lung Cancer Awareness Month – November 2011.

In addition to a community-wide educational event, they encouraged local school districts to incorporate anti-smoking and lung cancer awareness lessons into their health curriculum. To help with this effort, they distributed lung cancer awareness glow bracelets and educational posters stating, “Smoke free is the way to be!”

Local school districts were very receptive to incorporating these lessons into their curriculum. Teachers say that something as simple as a bracelet can get kids thinking about what they’re learning and keep them thinking about it. “The bracelets are a reminder [for the students] to think about the decisions that they make and how tobacco can have a negative effect on their life,” says Justin Running, a teacher from the West Salem School District.

“These glow bracelets not only served as a conversation piece but empowered the students to act as educators,” reports Kristen Marcou, project manager, Gundersen Lutheran Center for Cancer & Blood Disorders. “We were very pleased to learn that the kids spread the message about the dangers of smoking to their friends and family.”