



Photo submitted by Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare



Photo submitted by Columbia St. Mary's, Inc.



Photo submitted by Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center

# Wisconsin Hospitals: Caring for Our Neighbors

# About This Report

Wisconsin has one of the lowest uninsured rates in the country. That does not mean, however, that there are not people living in Wisconsin who need assistance with medical bills, or that everyone has equal access to health care.

Hospitals and health systems are caring for patients every day within their walls, but they are also hard at work in the community improving health through education and outreach, and increasing access to care by supporting free or reduced-fee clinics.

Health care is changing, but the hospital mission remains the same: Improve the health of the people living in Wisconsin. New technology and advances in medical science are helping people live longer and live better. Telemedicine is bridging the distance among primary care doctors, specialists and the patient to speed diagnosis and treatment. These technologies and services come at a cost, that's why Wisconsin hospitals are taking great care to carefully manage their resources so they can continue to invest in the health of their communities.

Wisconsin hospitals and health systems are accountable to their communities and committed to transparency. That is why for the past decade, all WHA members – 132 in total – have completed the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) community benefit survey. Wisconsin is one of a few states that has 100 percent of the hospitals voluntarily reporting community benefits. This helps quantify the resources, but it does not explain the impact this commitment has on the community.

We invite you to read the personal stories in this report. They help illustrate how hospitals and the health care professionals they employ are caring for patients and improving lives, while building stronger communities.

Therese Pandl



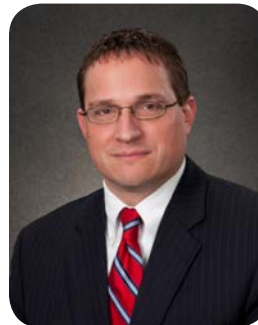
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# Wisconsin Hospitals: Caring for Our Neighbors

Wisconsin hospitals and health systems share a common mission to improve the health of the people living in the communities they serve. It is a mission that has withstood the test of time. At the clinical level, innovation and technology have advanced the practice of medicine, but health care professionals' kind, compassionate, patient-centered care for each and every patient is still the key to restoring health and hope to those who need help.

As the health care safety net in their community, hospitals are restoring health and hope to patients and their families every day. In 2014, hospitals cared for more than 7,000 patients in the hospital every day, and there were more than 17 million outpatient visits.

While Wisconsin has one of the lowest uninsured rates in the country, it does not mean that everyone who arrives at the hospital has coverage. In 2014, hospitals provided more than \$278 million in charity care to ensure that some of the state's most vulnerable citizens received necessary care. In addition, hospitals and health systems support or sponsor free clinics. Many of these clinics are located in the neighborhoods where they are needed most to make them accessible to those who may not have reliable transportation.

All together, Wisconsin hospitals and health systems provided \$1.68 billion in total community benefits.

Hospitals and health systems are part of the infrastructure of a community. They take their role seriously, and stay true to their missions to improve the health of everyone living in Wisconsin.



Photo submitted by Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics

## Uncompensated Care

Fear of a bill should never prevent a patient from seeking care at a Wisconsin hospital. Care always comes first. The stories that follow show a deep commitment to the patient while they are being hospitalized and a continuing concern for the person when they return to their home.

Hospital billing policies reflect respect and compassion for all patients. Hospitals work closely with patients and their families to gather the information necessary to determine if they qualify for either government assistance or for the hospital's discount or charity care program. Hospital staff does everything they can to connect patients with resources that can help them work through the complexity of their financial issues.

In 2014, hospitals provided more than \$278 million in charity care. It is just one example of how hospitals create a "safety net" of care in the communities they serve.

### When Medical Bills go Beyond What Hard-Working Hands can Handle

In a rural community there are many hardy souls who have worked hard their whole life. They take care of themselves. They make do with little and are proud to remain self-sufficient. Sometimes, however, everyone needs help.

A patient benefit specialist at Upland Hills Health noticed that one such woman was experiencing growing medical bills. This strong woman, now in her 90s, had raised several children and lost her husband many years ago. She was still self-sufficient through gardening, living off of her land and caring for herself.

The Upland Hills Health employee reached out to offer help managing her account balances. After consulting with her it was determined that she was 100 percent eligible to receive help through the uncompensated care program. Working through this program also helped her qualify for Medicaid. This hard-working elderly woman was relieved to have the financial burden lightened. A trinket presented in weather-worn, raspberry-stained hands signified the appreciation she felt toward the help she received with medical bills that were beyond her ability to pay.

### Community Benefits

Charity Care at Cost	\$278,585,184
Medicaid Shortfalls	\$899,927,725
Losses on Other Public Programs	\$19,665,376
Subsidized Health Services	\$107,510,405
Nursing Home Losses	\$15,170,219

Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

## A Helping Hand to Manage a Heart Condition

A 23-year-old male came to the Emergency Department (ED) of Aurora Medical Center Summit with symptoms that included heart palpitations, dizziness and shortness of breath. He was unemployed, living on a limited income, and uninsured.

The patient met with a financial advocate to discuss his payment options. He explained that he was born with his heart condition and is often unable to keep a job due to complications that he frequently experiences. However, he is able to work part-time when his symptoms are under control, and he is regularly monitored by a physician.

The financial advocate introduced him to the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program and invited him to complete an application. Upon review, he was approved for a 100 percent discount on the care he received in the hospital's ED.

In addition to his approval, the advocate also connected the patient with a social worker who informed him of a local free clinic that offers care for individuals who are uninsured. The patient has been going to the clinic regularly for monitoring of his heart condition and hopes to avoid additional emergency department visits.

Aurora Medical Center Summit

## Trying to Get Back to Work

Ginny works part-time through a temp agency in Green Bay. Being a temporary employee makes her ineligible for benefits and she is only scheduled when work is available, so her income is not steady. When she began suffering from severe back pain, she delayed seeing a physician until the pain became so severe it caused her to miss work.

In late September, Ginny arrived at the Aurora BayCare Medical Health Center as she could no longer handle the pain. There, a physician examined her and recommended an MRI, which revealed Ginny was in need of physical therapy to restore proper function of her back.

Being uninsured, Ginny contacted the patient financial advocate at Aurora BayCare Medical Center before scheduling her first therapy appointment to see if there were any financial assistance programs for which she would be eligible. She explained to the patient financial advocate that she lives alone on a very tight budget. The patient financial advocate explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program to her and offered to mail an application.

Soon, Ginny arrived at the advocate's office with the completed application and supporting documents. The advocate reviewed the documents and let Ginny know that she was approved for a 100 percent discount on the MRI she already received and the physical therapy that was necessary for her healing.

After a few weeks of intense therapy sessions, Ginny's pain began to dissipate and she was able to return to work. Ginny called the advocate and thanked her for helping her find a way to get the help she needed so she could concentrate on healing without experiencing additional financial burdens.

Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay

## Million Dollar Baby

"The excitement & anticipation we felt before the birth of our 4th child was dampened when I went into labor at 23 weeks," recalls Gina.

Having just moved to the area, Gina and her husband Jay had not contacted a local obstetrician. Luckily, they found themselves at Meriter. The physicians were able to stop Gina's labor, but within a week she had to have an emergency Caesarean. When their daughter, Liza, was born 15 weeks early, she weighed a meager 1lb 5oz.

"We were told to expect her to be in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for over three months, her original due date. How could we handle the enormous hospital bill?"

As an Amish family, Gina and Jay do not have insurance. Medical bills are paid in cash, sometimes with the help of their community. Gina's and Jay's faith kept them supported during these challenging times.

"God didn't provide us with answers all at once, but he did provide grace, peace and strength for each day." The family and their church prayed for the health of their daughter and for help through their financial troubles.

"Knowing our funds were limited, we thought it only right that Meriter give us a lower level of care. What if this was God's will? But, the medical team did not care about our ability to pay; they would give us their best."

The day Gina and Jay walked into the financial assistance department, they were greeted by staff who let them know they were here to help. Soon, they were approved for total financial assistance, nearly \$1 million. Now, they could focus solely on their daughter and her health.

Although Liza's time in the NICU was a roller-coaster ride, she began to grow and her condition stabilized. On the day Liza was released, she surprised everyone by passing her oxygen tests.

"We were thrilled to take our precious daughter home after 16 weeks in the NICU—no oxygen, no handicaps—eight whole pounds of baby to love and cuddle! A normal, happy baby, nothing short of a miracle straight from God!"

Meriter-UnityPoint Health, Madison

## Mounting Burden Relieved by Financial Assistance

Mayo Clinic Health System is committed to offering financial assistance to eligible patients who do not have the ability to pay for their medical services in part or whole. Charity care is only one component of our charitable mission. Our guiding philosophy is that the needs of the patient come first.

Mary, age 66 of Menomonie, received a number of medical procedures within five short months in 2013, including surgery for a torn rotator cuff and a degenerative disk that caused neck pain. She was then diagnosed with shingles and, upon treatment, her physician discovered she had ovarian cancer. She had a complete hysterectomy. In addition, she had developed pneumonia. Because of the mounting medical bills, she was living off credit cards. This put her in an extreme situation where she had a lot of catching up to do.

In order to pay off her balance in a reasonable amount of time, Patient Financial Services in Menomonie suggested she apply for financial assistance.

When she received news that she was eligible for financial assistance, a huge burden was lifted. This allowed her to slowly get back on her feet financially. She no longer had to make decisions about whether or not she could afford groceries or gas.

"It brought me to tears when I received the letter," says Mary. "I am so thankful that we have such wonderful health care in our area."

She received a large discount on her medical services and is grateful for the care provided by Mayo Clinic Health System.

Mayo Clinic Health System – Red Cedar, Menomonie

## Saving a Foot with a Helping Hand

Mary is a 55-year-old, married woman who has diabetes. She lost her job and now lives with her husband on his \$1,500 Social Security income each month. While working, she was insured and visited her primary care physician frequently to manage her diabetes. Since her job loss, she stopped visiting her physician as she was afraid of the expense while uninsured.

As managing her diabetes became more challenging, Mary experienced a health decline. She began experiencing new symptoms in her foot and decided it was best to see her physician again. After a thorough review, her physician determined she was in need of a procedure to save her foot due to diabetes-related complications.

Mary was terrified that she would lose her foot and had no idea how she would ever be able to come up with enough money for the procedure.

Aware of her financial situation, her primary care physician referred her to the financial advocate at Aurora Memorial Hospital of Burlington, the hospital where her foot procedure would be performed. The financial advocate helped Mary complete an application for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program, for which she received a 100 percent approval to cover the medical procedure she required.

Mary received the procedure she needed without delay, and her physician was able to save her foot.

Aurora Memorial Hospital of Burlington

## Covered 100%

"My husband, Steve, is a strong guy and doesn't complain about aches and pains very often," says Cally Touritlott of Abbotsford. "I knew after several days of him getting worse and worse, it was time to go to the ER."

Cally and Steve made their way to Aspirus Medford Hospital's Emergency Department. There they learned Steve had a severe infection. He was admitted to Aspirus Medford Hospital where he received care for two days while his body healed.



Photo submitted by Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics

At the time, the couple was only weeks away from having a baby and had thoughts of baby expenses on their mind. Now they also had the stress of Steve's medical treatment and bill weighing on them. Because they were in the process of transferring health insurance due to a job change, they had no coverage to help pay the bill. They decided to apply for Aspirus' Financial Assistance program hoping some portion of the bill would be covered.

A few weeks later, Steve was doing much better. In the back of his mind, however, he still worried about paying his medical bill.

Then Cally received news that changed everything. Aspirus' Financial Assistance program covered Steve's entire medical bill. Not only was the current bill paid in full, but the couple's medical expenses for the next year would be covered as well.

"When I heard the words 'you guys are covered 100 percent,' I cried on the phone," Cally says. "We were struggling thinking of how to pay even a

monthly payment. With a new baby, this was just a huge sense of relief."

Thankful for the financial and emotional support, Cally and Steve say they can now focus on their family, getting ahead, and supporting their new baby.

"We're so thankful for the attentiveness that was shown at Aspirus," Cally says. "They're just a great team, and you can tell that they really care about their patients."

Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics, Medford

## It's Okay to Accept a Helping Hand

Laura, a 34-year-old flower shop owner, arrived at the Aurora Lakeland Medical Center (ALMC) Emergency Department (ED) with pain in her upper abdomen. She hasn't been able to afford medical insurance premiums, so before heading to the ED, Laura stopped at her bank and withdrew \$400 to put toward the medical services she needed.

When ED staff found out that Laura was uninsured, they asked Kim, the patient financial advocate, to meet with Laura and explore programs for which she may be eligible. When Laura accepted the invitation to meet with Kim, she made it very clear she was not comfortable receiving a "charity handout." Kim proceeded to tell Laura about some options she may have, including the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program. As physicians arrived to examine Laura further, Kim gave Laura her business card and encouraged her to focus on getting better and contact her once discharged.

The next day, Laura underwent emergency surgery due to a large ovarian cyst and was recovering as a hospital inpatient. Laura requested to see Kim to discuss the Aurora Helping Hand program in more detail. Kim also took the opportunity to explain that Laura qualified for a special open enrollment period via the marketplace. Laura accepted the help and together, they completed the Aurora Helping Hand application and applied for insurance through the marketplace.

Laura is now insured. She also received approval for coverage through Aurora Helping Hand for medical services she already received and any follow-up services required until her new insurance became effective. Although it was a difficult decision for Laura, accepting assistance through the Aurora Helping Hand program covered services totaling over \$35,000.

When Laura's new insurance began, she called Kim and expressed her gratitude for the program. Laura told Kim that she wanted to show her appreciation by giving back. Laura then asked to be connected with the hospital's foundation staff so she could donate her time and some flowers from her shop to help with the hospital's annual fundraising event.

Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn

## UWHC's Uncompensated Care Program

When a person becomes ill, their first priority should be their physical well-being. UW Hospitals and Clinics' (UWHC) uncompensated care program is there to work with those patients who experience financial hardship related to their medical bills.

To help patients better focus on their health instead of financial situation, UWHC is proud to offer an uncompensated care program to patients who are uninsured or unable to pay for the care provided at UWHC. In FY14, UWHC's Community Care program provided \$26.1 million of charity care at cost.

Many of the patients who have benefited from the uncompensated care program are extremely grateful for the program and those who work with them to make this a possibility.

"It was such a relief to know that this program existed," said one patient who was able to receive help from this program during her husband's illness. "I felt relieved that there are programs like this to help people."

Another patient wrote, "I know we could not have been able to afford the payments for my father to receive treatments for his lymphoma. Because of your help, he was just told his cancer is in complete remission. On behalf of my family, we are so grateful for this program and that my father now has another chance to live life to the fullest."

UW Hospitals and Clinics, Madison

## Lydia's Letter

"I worked full-time for over 42 years until I was injured at work and lost my administrative assistant position. I now manage a chronic inflammatory condition affecting my hands, forearms, and elbows. Along with job loss came a loss of all of my benefits, including medical insurance coverage.

I received worker's compensation for a couple of weeks and then applied for unemployment. After 26 weeks, unemployment ran out, and I was once again left without an income. I submitted at least four job applications each week but, unfortunately, I was not able to secure a job due mostly to my injury and inability to perform the usual administrative assistant duties. Also, as a 60-year-old, it is difficult to compete in today's competitive job market.

My husband and I sank deep into debt. Previously, we both worked and brought in about \$4,000 per month for our living expenses. Now, we are trying to live on my husband's Social Security and a small monthly annuity.

At the end of July 2014 I had a heart attack. An ambulance rushed me to Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center where a cardiac catheterization showed a 90 percent blockage of my main coronary artery. I required two back-to-back stents in one artery and one additional stent in another artery.

When I received the bill for the services rendered to me during hospital stay, my heart sank. I reached out for help and the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program responded with a 100 percent discount on the hospital medical services provided to me. I am breathing easier now that I know this momentous weight has been lifted. I now have temporary protection should any other medical needs arise while I wait for my Social Security Disability approval.

The Aurora Helping Hand program is a huge blessing in my life! I can now take part in the cardiac rehabilitation program prescribed by my cardiologist and the anti-coagulation clinic that will help prevent a stroke due to my atrial fibrillation. This program is proof that miracles really do happen." -Lydia

Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee

## Charity Care at Mile Bluff – Changing Lives Every Day

As long as there is a need for health care, there will also be a need for financial assistance.

At Mile Bluff Medical Center, we know that our service often goes beyond health care and into the realm of charity care. As an organization committed to providing for the needs of the individuals we serve, we have a program in place to help many of our patients who are not able to cover the full cost of their medical care.

During the 2014 fiscal year alone, Mile Bluff provided assistance to 877 individuals through the Community Care Program, forgiving medical bills totaling over \$1.7 million.

A few notes of thanks we received from our grateful patients include:

“I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the assistance on my hospital and clinic bills... I've never had help before and it sure is a big weight off my shoulders! Thank you again.”

“Thank you for the kindness and understanding as it related to the situation with my son. I really appreciate the help you provided with the process. It helped provide a sense of relief and comfort knowing that the bill was removed. God bless!”

“We really appreciate all of the help you were able to get for us through your program. We don't know how we could have been able to pay all of the bills. Again, thanks a million to everyone involved!”

As long as there is a need for health care, there will also be a need for financial assistance. At Mile Bluff, we are committed to offering both of these things to the individuals we serve.

Mile Bluff exists to provide care at its best and to be there when we're needed most...including when what patients need most is medical financial assistance.

Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston

## A Helping Hand Until Coverage Starts

Elaine is a proud, single, 62-year-old woman. Although she has limited abilities due to a chronic illness, she is able to maintain a part-time job with a local faith-based organization where she puts in about 17 hours each week. Elaine lives a simple life, her basic needs are met and she's happy.

In March, 2014, even though her Medicare coverage had not yet started, Elaine's symptoms reached a concerning level so she brought herself to the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora St. Luke's South Shore. The ED physicians checked her out, addressed her concerns, and were able to discharge Elaine from the hospital.

At the time of her ED visit, because she was not yet covered, Elaine requested to set up a payment plan to pay her hospital medical expenses. In July, Elaine arrived at the patient financial advocate window to make a payment on her account. Joanne, the advocate who was working that day, briefly reviewed Elaine's account and asked Elaine for permission to do an assessment to see if she could assist Elaine with any programs that may help her pay off her balance.

Elaine agreed and Joanne assisted her in applying for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. Elaine was approved for 100 percent coverage, which meant her entire \$710.90 total for medical services provided to her was covered.

In October, Elaine once again visited the financial advocate window and asked to speak with Joanne. When Joanne arrived at the window, Elaine pulled a \$20 bill out of her purse and handed it to Joanne. She said, “I don't have a lot of money, but I would like to make one last payment to the Aurora Helping Hand program to show my appreciation.” Joanne informed her that her gift was unnecessary, but Elaine insisted. Joanne accepted the \$20 payment and applied it to Elaine's account.

Aurora St. Luke's South Shore

## Community Care Eases Stress for Racine Family

Mariana lives in Racine, WI and doesn't speak English. She lives with her adult daughter who was driving her to a free clinic in Illinois to receive medical care for her diabetes. They didn't know where else to go, but Mariana's health was deteriorating and the long drives were getting harder. The situation was causing financial stress on the family who had limited access to transportation. That's when they found out about Cinthia Vega, a financial advocate at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – All Saints, who also happens to speak Spanish.

Vega was able to communicate with Mariana, schedule an appointment with a primary care physician and inform her about other services available to her. With help from Vega and her physician, Mariana was eventually able to get her diabetes under control.

“My mom's health is greatly improved now that she has regular checkups. She looks and feels so much better and that relieves stress for our whole family,” said Mariana's daughter, Annabell.

But Vega didn't stop with just getting Mariana the medical care she desperately needed; she helped find a way to pay for it as well. Vega helped enroll Mariana in Wheaton's Community Care program that assists qualified individuals in financial need to pay for medically necessary health care services at Wheaton facilities. Community Care paid for all of Mariana's medical expenses to the relief of the entire family.

“Wheaton has been a great choice of care for my mother, because it doesn't matter who you are, what you look like, or what language you speak. Wheaton staff has been caring and helpful, and they have always treated us with respect,” Annabell commented.

Annabell went on to share, “I don't have adequate words to explain what this means to me and my mom. All I can say is that I believe my mother is alive and healthy thanks to the excellent care she received and continues to receive at Wheaton.”

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – All Saints, Racine





## Sometimes Things Just Happen

*“Eve and Frank are kind, humble, and sincere individuals. Today’s economy is changing the way businesses operate and unfortunately, both Eve and Frank lost their jobs. Neither of them planned to retire early; it just happened that way. Then Eve got sick when they were already struggling to make ends meet. Their story is a prime example of why the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program helps people live well when they are down on their luck.”* -Sarah, Patient Financial Advocate

Eve, a 60-year-old woman, lost her job when her company downsized. Living in a rural community, it was difficult to find a new job so Eve began traveling with her husband, Frank, across the country delivering goods. For the last year, Eve enjoyed the scenes of America’s blue highways with Frank. The couple’s budget was tight, but Frank’s income met their needs and they were happy.

A few months ago, Frank’s employer downsized, forcing Frank to retire early. The couple started living on Frank’s early Social Security benefits and a \$200 rental income. They began struggling to pay bills and purchase basic grocery items.

Then, Eve caught a cold and a cough that lingered for weeks. One night, Eve woke from her sleep with a high fever and shortness of breath. Frank took her to the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center where Eve was admitted for pneumonia treatment.

The couple became nervous about affording Eve’s medical care and asked to speak with a financial advocate. The financial advocate, Sarah, met with them, explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program and provided them with an application. After hearing the details of the couple’s financial struggles, Sarah also assisted them in applying for FoodShare benefits.

The couple returned the completed application to Sarah. About a week later, Sarah called and informed them that Eve was approved for a 100 percent discount on her hospital and medical expenses. Additionally, the couple also received an approval notification for WI FoodShare benefits.

Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center



Arletha (right) with one of her nurses, Katie.

## Saved by a Bell

When Arletha Cobb went to the hospital emergency department with symptoms resembling a stroke, she could not have anticipated the coming turn of events. Her facial paralysis was diagnosed as Bell’s palsy, a weakness of the facial muscles caused by nerve damage. The good news for Arletha was that Bell’s palsy is not related to a stroke, and often resolves on its own. Because Arletha did not have a primary care doctor, she was referred to Progressive Community Health Centers for ongoing care.

During a routine exam, her doctor at Progressive recommended a mammogram. “That’s when I found out I had a very early stage of breast cancer,” says Arletha.

Arletha’s family and friends rallied with close support while she underwent treatment at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin. With limited health insurance, Arletha qualified for significant help through Froedtert’s Financial Assistance Program. Today, Arletha is a breast cancer survivor in good health, in good spirits and back at work.

“I think God gave me Bell’s palsy for a reason,” says Arletha, who ends every health care visit with a hug for her doctors. “So many wonderful people came into my life—my cancer care team and my doctor at the clinic—and they have really been there for me. I am so thankful for everyone at Froedtert and Progressive.”

Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

## Multiple Surgeries Require Aftercare

When your physician tells you that you are in need of several surgeries, what is the first question that would come to mind? Would you be worried about the how long it will take to heal? Would you wonder if it will hurt? Would you be curious about risks surrounding the surgery?

Well for M.Z., a 62-year-old woman, the first thing that came to mind was, “How am I going to pay for this?”

M.Z. is unable to work due to multiple chronic medical conditions. Because she is unemployed, she is uninsured and living on a limited income. She was already struggling to keep up with her basic needs and, as if the financial stress of needing multiple surgeries was not enough to worry her, she also required aftercare services for proper healing from the surgeries, meaning she will be required to remain in the hospital for an extended stay and rehabilitation.

Familiar with M.Z.’s financial concerns about the medically necessary surgeries, the social worker at Aurora West Allis Medical Center contacted the financial advocate and asked her to meet with M.Z. The counselor invited M.Z. to her office and asked for some basic information to explore assistance program options. Based on the information M.Z. provided, the financial advocate believed she would be eligible for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program.

After filling out the application and providing financial advocate with the additional documentation that is required, M.Z. gained approval for a 100 percent discount on the medical services needed and the surgeries and inpatient rehabilitation she needed to heal. No longer did M.Z. have to choose between receiving necessary medical care and being able to meet her other basic living needs.

Aurora West Allis Medical Center

## Eleven-Week Illness and Recovery Puts Patient Out of Work

Kim G. of Beloit has always had a job. Maybe not one that brought in a lot of income, but she was able to take care of herself. Until one day in February when she just couldn't get off the couch. She knew something was wrong and went immediately to the emergency room. She was so ill that the following weeks are still very vague and spotty.

"I was in Beloit Hospital for several days under the care of cardiologists and ended up being transferred to Madison," Kim remembers. "I had an aortic dissection, which is a 14-hour surgery."

An aortic dissection is an often fatal condition where the inner layer of the aorta tears. Blood surges through the tear, causing the inner and middle layers of the aorta to separate (dissect).

In total between hospital and rehab stays, Kim took eight weeks to recuperate enough to even be able to go to her parent's home. There she spent an additional three weeks before feeling well enough to go back to her own house.

Most recently Kim worked as a third-shift caregiver for a mentor network. Since she didn't have any heart disease in her family, this all came as quite a shock to her. Since her illness in February, she has not been healthy enough to return to work. She continues to suffer with discomfort and breathing issues. When Kim is finally feeling well enough to return to work, she will not be able to do the heavy lifting of patient care, so she will have to look for other work.

"It's been tough since I haven't had any income since February," Kim adds. "I've been filling out a lot of paperwork and hope to qualify for disability, however, I haven't heard."

Kim is very appreciative that Beloit Health System provided financial assistance to cover the cost of her hospital stay.

"I don't have anyone to take care of me, so I don't know how I would have paid the bills. The staff in the finance department was very wonderful and helped me so much."

Beloit Health System, Beloit

## When You Just Need a Safe Place to Heal

The transition from adolescence into adulthood can be difficult for many people. For one young man, J.W., this transition was extremely difficult due to a history of family turmoil and emotional abuse, which took him to a place that he never imagined he would go:

He was on the brink of suicide.

Afraid of his own mind, J.W. brought himself to the Aurora Psychiatric Hospital (APH). There, the intake nurse evaluated J.W.'s behavioral state and determined that in order to keep him safe he should be admitted for an inpatient stay. While an inpatient, J.W. received one-on-one counseling, participated in group discussions, and learned some new coping skills to apply in his own life when faced with challenges.

In one of the discussions with his counselor, J.W. worried about how he was going to pay for his stay. Being a high school graduate over the age 18, he was no longer on his parents' insurance and was unable to afford insurance of his own as he worked part-time and lived in his own apartment with a roommate. J.W.'s counselor advised him to contact the financial advocate at APH to discuss any payment options he may have.

The financial advocate visited J.W. in his room to obtain information and explore financial assistance programs for which J.W. may be eligible. She explained Aurora's Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program and began the application process.

After J.W. was discharged from the hospital, he returned to the financial advocate, bringing the documentation required in order to complete the application process. J.W. was elated when he received his program acceptance letter in the mail, informing him that he was approved for a 100 percent discount on the services he received.

J.W. is now working with a support group on a regular basis for additional support he needs to stay on the path of healing.

Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa

## A New Diabetes Diagnosis Can be Scary

Cara's friend brought her to the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora Medical Center in Grafton. She was experiencing symptoms that included oral thrush and vomiting. She also informed the ED nurse that she had recently lost a large amount of weight in a short period of time even though her nutritional and exercise habits were unchanged. Because she was presenting some classic symptoms of Type I diabetes, the ED nurse tested Cara's blood and confirmed that her glucose level was elevated. She immediately provided her with insulin to bring her glucose back to a healthy level.

This was a new diagnosis for Cara and it was a little scary. Cara had no idea she was diabetic and knew nothing about the disease. Cara is a young, single, unemployed woman living on \$165 a week in unemployment. She is uninsured and has not been seen by a physician since she was a small child. Worried about how she was going to manage this new diagnosis and pay for her medical services and the follow-up care she required, she contacted the Aurora's financial advocate for help.

The advocate met with Cara while she was still in the hospital, learning to manage her diabetes. The advocate explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program and gave her an application to complete. Within a week of her discharge, Cara returned to the advocate's office with the completed application and supporting documents.

A few days later when she found out she was approved at 100 percent, Cara returned to the advocate's office to thank her for helping her. She stated, "I didn't know what I was going to do or how I was going to pay my bills, but you helped me lift that financial burden so I could put all my focus on learning to manage my diabetes so I don't end up in the hospital again."

Aurora Medical Center Grafton



## Community Care Helps Patient Focus on Healing

When Michael Brachmann came to Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in June 2015, he was newly diagnosed with esophageal cancer. His tumor was blocking his stomach and he needed a feeding tube as a result. Unfortunately, his new health insurance was not going to cover his medical expenses because his symptoms began before he was insured.

“I was stuck with a health plan that wasn’t going to help me. Thankfully I met with Sharon Young, a financial advocate at Wheaton Franciscan-Elmbrook Memorial, and she held my hand through the complicated process of canceling that plan and finding me a better one,” said Brachmann.

“I assisted Michel with enrollment into an affordable health plan that does not have a pre-existing clause and would cover his services going forward. I was also able to help him connect with the Wheaton Franciscan – Elmbrook Memorial Foundation to cover his prescription and feeding tube costs in the meantime and enroll him in our Community Care program to pay for the rest of his out-of-pocket costs,” said Young.

Community Care is Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare’s charity care program that assists qualified individuals in financial need to pay for medically necessary health care services at Wheaton facilities.

Brachmann, who is self-employed, had been unable to work due to a back injury when the cancer symptoms began.

“I can’t even tell you what the financial help has meant to me. The care I’ve received at Wheaton has just been the best. Everyone has been so caring and helpful,” shared Brachmann.

“I still have a ways to go on my journey of battling cancer and getting better, but being able to focus on healing and not on mounting medical bills has been a true blessing. I am so grateful,” he added.

Wheaton Franciscan – Elmbrook Memorial, Brookfield

## When Emergency Care is Not Enough

It was a late October evening when Joe arrived to the Emergency Department (ED) of Aurora Sinai Medical Center for a severe headache that he was experiencing over the past few days. Joe could not handle the pain any longer and over-the-counter medications offered no comfort. When the ED physician examined Joe, he determined that he could only offer temporary relief and that Joe would need to schedule a visit to meet with a neurologist for further examination.

Because Joe was working as a temporary employee through an agency, he was uninsured. When he informed the patient access representative of this, she suggested that he speak to the financial advocate at Aurora Sinai Medical Center before scheduling his appointment to see if there were any financial assistance programs for which he would be eligible.

When Joe called the financial advocate, she explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program to him and asked if he would like her to mail an application for him to fill out. A few days later, Joe arrived at the counselor’s office with the completed application and the supporting documents. She reviewed the documents and let Joe know that she would contact him after his application was processed. The next week Joe received a letter in the mail approving him for a 100 percent discount on the ED visit and for the follow-up care he required with the neurologist.

Later that day, Joe called the patient access representative back, informed her of his Aurora Helping Hand approval and scheduled his much-needed neurology appointment.

Aurora Sinai Medical Center

## Community Care

Having a baby is a joyous moment. However, when that baby begins to have issues with feeding, cannot seem to shake respiratory infections, and struggles with normal movement, that joy turns to fear and the medical bills mount, adding worry to the mix. Many tests later, that baby was determined to have had a stroke during birth, which caused Hemiparetic Cerebral Palsy. Insurance and HELP loans were not enough to cover the costs. And that was before the roof on their house leaked. But the family did not give up and worked hard to pay their mounting bills.

Then the baby’s mother had a knee injury and struggled to walk. After an MRI she ended up in the Emergency Room with swelling in multiple joints and even more limited movement. Tests identified an auto-immune condition. With the seriousness of the condition, she was no longer able to work and, once again, medical bills were mounting. Because of her condition, she was not longer able to care for her children and needed assistance during the day.

HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital Medical Center worked with the family and was able to provide them 100 percent Community Care coverage for their hospital expenses, greatly relieving the burden and helping the family move toward a happier time.

HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay

## Unlucky Break

Neal was working freelance, doing odd jobs for a few different companies. He was single and easy going—never even thought of having health insurance. Then the unexpected happened; he broke his right arm. There was no worker’s compensation because he worked for himself and no liability coverage either. Now, not only did he have no insurance, but he also had no income!

Neal was very grateful to Holy Family Memorial for caring for him and offering him assistance through Community Care totaling approximately \$27,700. Once healed, he found a full-time job with a local company. He is now proud to say that he has health insurance coverage giving him peace of mind and financial resources, if needed, in the future.

Holy Family Memorial, Manitowoc

## A Helping Hand When the Pain is Too Much to Stomach

Nikki, a young single woman in her early 30s, has struggled with recurrent health concerns for a majority of her life. She often found herself arriving at the Emergency Department at the Aurora Medical Center Kenosha in search of relief from the symptoms she was experiencing including nausea, vomiting, dehydration, and severe stomach pains. Her condition consists of frequent kidney stones, GERD, and painful cysts on her ovaries making it impossible for her to continue working.

Because Nikki was unable to work, she had a limited income and no health insurance available to her. Nikki would often wait until the pain became unbearable before going to the hospital emergency department in fear of the bill that would follow.

When the financial advocate became aware of Nikki's situation, she scheduled a meeting to discuss her financial options. The advocate explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program and provided Nikki with an application process.

A few days after their meeting, Nikki returned to the advocate's office with the completed form and required supporting documents. After the advocate completed the submission of Nikki's application, she was pleased to inform Nikki that she was approved for a 100 percent discount on the hospital bills that she had already incurred due to her illness. Nikki was extremely relieved to hear the great news and thanked the advocate profusely as she could now focus more on staying well and worry less about how she would be able to afford the medical care she needed.

Aurora Medical Center Kenosha

## Community Care Helps Patient in Need

High deductibles can overwhelm a person when faced with large medical expenses. Recently a patient shared with a financial counselor that he was struggling in just such a way. Having been an inpatient three times over a few months, he needed to meet a \$9,000 deductible before he would receive assistance. The individual is disabled, his wife is collecting unemployment and they have one child.

Knowing he had reached his deductible, the counselor assisted him with getting payment for the expenses above his deductible and in applying for the hospital's Community Care program. Ultimately, the patient qualified for 100 percent Community Care of the incurred bills and is very thankful this program is available to assist with the deductible they will owe.

HSHS St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay

## It Could Happen to Anyone

Ryan, a 24-year-old male, was helping his elderly neighbor clean his sidewalk after a substantial Wisconsin snowstorm. The snow was wet and heavy and eventually jammed one of the blades of the snow blower he was using. When Ryan believed the machine was turned off, he reached underneath in attempt to clear the snow and free the jammed blade. When the jam released, the snow blower turned on in error and Ryan's hand was caught inside.

The neighbor rushed Ryan to the Emergency Department (ED) of Aurora Medical Center Manitowoc County with his hand wrapped in bloody bandages. When the ED caregivers removed the bandages, they discovered that four of his fingers had been cut off by the snow blower. The on-call orthopedic surgeon immediately operated on Ryan's hand in an attempt to save his fingers and the ability to use his hand.

Ryan works seasonally and is not offered insurance. He is also ineligible for access to insurance through his parents. When he met with the patient financial advocate, she provided him with an application to the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program. Ryan was approved for a 100 percent discount on his surgery and follow-up physical therapy that has allowed him to regain enough function in his hand that he can get back to work.

Aurora Medical Center Manitowoc County

## Community Care Helps Cancer Patient

Cancer is a devastating illness in many ways. A recent patient at HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital found herself dealt with a hand that was compounded by financial difficulties. The patient was working out of her home and had what she termed "horrible insurance." Struggling at best, she then had her work hours cut back. To compound her difficulties, her cancer treatment made it impossible for her to continue to work at all. Working with a financial counselor, she was able to get coverage through Free Choice and was then approved for the hospital's Community Care for her balances. This patient was originally not going to receive treatments because of the cost and lack of insurance. However, because of the assistance provided by the hospital, she did receive treatment and is in remission.

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

## Charity Care

“Lamin” was referred to ABC for Health Inc. from a social worker at St. Mary’s Hospital. It wasn’t Lamin’s first hospitalization due to complications from his diabetes. He emigrated from West Africa over five years ago, and he struggled to work and stay healthy. Poor health and infrequent employment meant his money ran out quickly. Advocates worked with Lamin to explore eligibility options for an emergency Medicaid program. Falling just short of certain rules for this coverage program, charity care was Lamin’s only option.

Advocates gathered copies of his bills, including those from clinics and radiologists, and got approval from St. Mary’s Hospital and Dean for charity care to relieve both his \$12,000 in bills and his mounting stress. With better access to health services, Lamin may be able to better control his diabetes, and that may help him maintain employment.

St. Mary’s Hospital, Madison

## Providing a Helping Hand to Save a Hand

Hanna arrived to the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora Medical Center Washington County after an accident that caused a large piece of glass to lodge into her hand. An initial examination and an x-ray helped the ED physicians determine that Hanna’s hand required surgery in order to remove the glass and restore function of her hand.

Hanna was a 20-year-old, unmarried, college student with a limited income and no health insurance. Fearful of the cost involved with having the procedure, Hanna requested to speak with a financial advocate before she would sign the surgery consent forms.

Per her request, a financial advocate immediately met with Hanna in the ED. The advocate explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program and provided her with an application. Hanna filled out the application and phoned a family member who brought the supporting documents that she required. The financial advocate processed the application and within a few hours informed Hanna that she was pre-approved for a 100 percent discount on the hospital expenses related to the surgery she required.

The day after she gained financial clearance, Hanna received her hand surgery.

After the glass was removed, Hanna began a long healing process and eventually regained full function of her hand again. She was extremely thankful the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program was available to help her.

Aurora Medical Center Washington County

## A Burden Was Lifted

Financing health care can be difficult at any time. However, when overwhelming costs are compounded by a terminal illness, it becomes more daunting.

Such was the case with a patient who contacted HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital requesting assistance. Suffering from a terminal illness, she was trying to get her affairs in order for her family as she potentially had only six months left to live. She was paying \$350 every month just for medication. Working with a financial counselor, the patient was able to receive a 100 percent charity discount on her hospital and clinic bills. The patient was truly grateful for the assistance and stated a burden was lifted off of her shoulders in a time of need.

HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls

## Filling the Gaps in Coverage

Lynnae, who is new to her patient financial advocate role, recently had the privilege to approve a Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance application for the first time.

Roger is a 58-year-old man who lives alone and has many health issues that make it difficult for him to work. He averages around 15 hours per week making minimum wage, which is all his body is able to handle. Roger has maintained medical coverage for many months through Medicaid, which has enabled him to manage his multiple chronic illnesses effectively.

In March, 2015, Roger experienced a lapse in his Medicaid coverage.

Because he had difficulties managing his care on his own during this lapse in coverage, his symptoms worsened and he avoided seeing his physician as he wanted to wait until his Medicaid began again the following month. But his symptoms became so severe that he was admitted as an inpatient to Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh where he received medical care for 10 days until he was well enough to be discharged safely.

While Roger was in the hospital, Lynnae met with him and explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program. Roger filled out the application and returned it to Lynnae with the supporting documents. Roger was quickly approved for a 100 percent discount on the medical services he received and any additional medical services he required to remain well during the gap in his Medicaid coverage.

Roger was extremely thankful for the approval notice, but Lynnae was even more thankful to witness the great things the Aurora Helping Hand program does for the people who need it most.

Aurora Medical Center Oshkosh



Photo submitted by Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield

## Free Clinics

Where do you go when you need a doctor and you don't have insurance? More and more hospitals are establishing or supporting free clinics to serve those who do not have a "medical home." Every effort is made to connect patients with follow up care and even help them obtain the medical supplies or prescription drugs they need.

### Vital Care for the Uninsured/Underinsured

It is estimated that as many as eight percent of the population is uninsured or underinsured. When these residents are forced to seek medical help, many times their only alternative is a costly visit to their local emergency room. A clinic in West Bend supported by Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin St. Joseph Hospital is helping give a high-quality treatment option to Washington County residents who find themselves in that position. In 2014, more than 800 took advantage of this valuable resource.

The Albrecht Free Clinic was established in 1996 by Dr. James E. Albrecht, a local physician who believed that everyone, regardless of social or financial status, deserved good medical care. During its almost 20 years of service, the clinic has provided that care for mainly what are described as the "working poor," or residents in Washington County who are not able to receive health care coverage through their jobs but whose income is too high qualify for BadgerCare.

One example of the patients seen at the Albrecht Clinic is a woman named Amy who came in when she suddenly experienced severe swelling in her legs. Amy did not have medical insurance from her employer and was unsure of what to do. Fortunately, she heard about the clinic and visited to try and determine what was causing her condition. Staff there performed a variety of lab tests and ultrasounds and eventually identified a problem with her kidneys as causing the swelling. She was referred to a specialist at the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin St. Joseph's Hospital and was given help in successfully applying for financial assistance.

Alissa Mosal, a registered nurse at the clinic, said this case is typical for many of the individuals who utilize the free clinic. Mosal added that by collaborating with the clinic, St. Joseph Hospital is making available many experts and services that those patients would not otherwise be able to access.

Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin St. Joseph's Hospital, West Bend

## Open Arms Free Clinic

The Open Arms Free Clinic (O AFC) in Elkhorn, WI, provides primary medical care to underserved, uninsured persons and currently is the only clinic of its kind in Walworth County. In 2014, O AFC provided care for approximately 100 patients each month and dispensed over 4,500 medications. To help move individuals into other appropriate health homes, the clinic assisted over 100 patients into health insurance plans including BadgerCare Plus and the marketplace.

The clinic is invaluable to the community. Maria has been a patient of the clinic since its opening in 2012. Through a partnership between the clinic and Marshall Clinic's mobile mammogram bus, Maria received a mammogram, which led to a breast cancer diagnosis. Through the clinic's partners, Maria was able to receive the surgery, treatments and follow-up care she needed to fight her cancer.

"If the clinic wasn't here, I never would have found my cancer. It was a miracle."

Aurora Lakeland Medical Center (ALMC) believes in the clinic's mission and is a long-time partner in supporting the invaluable work of the volunteer physicians and clinicians at O AFC. In 2014, ALMC provided over \$47,800 in specialty physician consults and diagnostic radiology services to 55 patients referred by O AFC. These donated services helped the volunteer physicians and clinicians in diagnosing and treating patients experiencing a multitude of symptoms and chronic illnesses.



Maria and Robert Fasano, MD, Medical Director, Open Arms Free Clinic

Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn

## Angel of Hope Clinic Provides Compassionate Care for Cancer Patient

Isaac Mercado-Aguilar had been experiencing gastrointestinal discomfort for a while when he walked into the Angel of Hope Clinic. After he notified the provider that his sister was suffering from colon cancer, he was referred to Dr. Garland Yarborough, who performed a colonoscopy on him. Unfortunately, the doctor found a malignant mass.

Isaac says the staff at Angel of Hope helped him with all of his appointments and got him in to see the doctor right away. He added, "I could not have received better care. I think of the staff here as more than medical professionals; they are like my family."

Isaac has since had a resection with Dr. Mahoney and he is now under the care of his oncologist, Dr. Francis Cuevas.

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare - St. Francis provides support for the Angel of Hope Clinic, a free health clinic housed in a homeless shelter on Milwaukee's south side. Nurse practitioners handle thousands of visits each year including management of chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes.

"At Angel of Hope we provide health care to patients in the community who need it most. Often times they have not seen a health care professional in years, if ever. We provide access to health care services regardless of financial or insurance status. By overcoming language, educational, transportation and financial barriers, we strive to live the mission, vision and values of our health care ministry," said Marni Hebert, nurse practitioner.

Isaac continues on his journey to recovery and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. Despite some mild lingering pain he is feeling better overall.

"I've recommended Angel of Hope to others. The excellent and compassionate care I've received there means a lot to me, and I am very grateful," added Isaac.

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare - St. Francis, Milwaukee

## Progressive Community Health Center: Support for Community Health Care

Critical support from Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Froedtert Hospital is allowing a Milwaukee neighborhood to receive improved medical and dental services. The Lisbon Avenue Health Center, part of Progressive Community Health Center's facility located at 35th and West Lisbon, recently reopened after a two-year remodeling and expansion aided by a \$2 million donation from Froedtert Hospital.

The new center is providing an improved continuum of care for residents of the Milwaukee westside neighborhood as well as offering expanded services. The facility features new radiology equipment including mammography provided by Froedtert Hospital, a new community resources room and increased dental staff and facilities. The number of exam rooms has also nearly doubled, including several rooms used for visiting specialists from the Medical College of Wisconsin.

The expanded facility is allowing medical and dental services to be provided to many more residents of the Lisbon Avenue neighborhood. It is expected that the Lisbon Avenue Health Center will be able to serve up to 11,000 more patients per year than it has in the past. That will allow the center and supporting agencies like Froedtert Hospital to create a healthier and stronger community.

Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

## Albrecht Free Clinic

The Albrecht Free Clinic (AFC), which provides free medical care to uninsured and underinsured people, is the only free and charitable clinic in Washington County. In 2014, the clinic served over 800 patients and provided 2,030 patient visits. Of the patients served, approximately, 70 percent were managing chronic illnesses while the other 30 percent visited the clinic for acute care issues.

Aurora Medical Center Washington County supports AFC by promoting their services and encouraging uninsured individuals to establish a “health home” relationship with AFC. In turn we accept vouchers for eligible ancillary services and provide specialty follow-up care to patients referred by AFC. In 2014 we redeemed 75 vouchers from AFC with a value of over \$29,000 in services. Our caregivers support the clinic by donating time to staff the clinic and care for patients and assist in clinic operations. Through the Aurora Health Care Better Together Fund, a one-time charitable fund established in 2014, we provided a one-time contribution of \$80,000 to expand service capacity for walk-in and appointment time at the clinic and to add behavioral health services.

The role of free clinics in providing a safety net for people with emergent health issues, but no insurance, cannot be underestimated.

A case in point is Buster, a truck driver by trade, who developed diabetes and began needing insulin shots. Eventually, his diabetes became too much for him to control and he was no longer able to drive, which led to losing his insurance. Knowing he was in need of medical care but no longer having insurance, Buster went to the Albrecht clinic in search of help. The clinic’s volunteer physicians and staff were able to provide Buster with the care and education he required to manage his diabetes and helped him gain access to insurance.

In his own words, “Thanks to the clinic, my diabetes is now under control and I am able to go back to truck driving.”

Aurora Medical Center Washington County, Hartford



Stephanie and one of the Lakeshore Community Health Care nurses

## Lakeshore Community Health Care

Lakeshore Community Health Care (LCHC) provides primary and preventive medical, oral health care and behavioral health services for uninsured people living in Sheboygan County. Lakeshore’s mission is to provide quality health care to anyone who needs it.

LCHC has been a new source of life for Stephanie. The clinic’s staff recently helped Stephanie move from receiving no health care to someone who recently quit smoking after 40 years, received her first mammogram, and began receiving mental health care regularly to help her stay well.

Stephanie enjoys the time she spends at the clinic. In addition to improving her health, she loves how well everyone treats her. She has never before experienced the genuine care that the LCHC staff has provided her physically, mentally, and emotionally.

“If Lakeshore Community Health Center was not here for me, I don’t

know where I would be or what would have happened to me.”

Stephanie wishes that everyone could come to the clinic. “I tell people about Lakeshore all the time,” Stephanie states, “There is a standard there. There is a mission there: to be kind.”

Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center also believes in the clinic’s goal to provide access to comprehensive health care for individuals like Stephanie in Sheboygan County. For this reason, in 2014, Lakeshore Community Health Care received a grant through the Aurora Better Together Fund to build a new facility that will accommodate the needs of more people.

Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center

## Greater Milwaukee Free Clinic

The Greater Milwaukee Free Clinic’s (GMFC) mission is to provide free medical care and pharmaceuticals to low income community members who do not have medical insurance or the ability to pay for medical care. The clinic opened in December 1995 with the help of donated funds and equipment, and is staffed by volunteer medical professionals and support personnel. In addition, Aurora West Allis Medical Center (AWAMC) has supported the clinic since its onset with donated laboratory and radiology services. This support has aided in patient diagnoses of breast cancers, liver failure, diabetes, and so much more.

One patient’s story is a great example of how the clinic and the hospital can work together to save lives:

One Tuesday night, a self-employed man in his late 40s arrived at the GMFC and explained to a physician that he had lost 80 pounds over the past year and was weak to the point that he could no longer work. After the physician examined the man, he arranged for him to have lab work performed at AWAMC. On Wednesday afternoon, the physician received the lab results, which indicated that the man had a blood sugar level of 704, a glycated hemoglobin level off the charts, and his electrolytes were abnormal. The GMFC physician started the man on insulin to treat his newly-diagnosed diabetes and within several weeks, his blood sugars dropped to well within the normal level. Had he not come to the free clinic, the man would have likely ended up in a hospital intensive care.

Aurora West Allis Medical Center



## Gladys Rogers' Story

For years, Gladys Rogers was active in Columbia St. Mary's community-based chronic disease clinics, helping spread life-saving information to her fellow congregants at the Greater Bethlehem Temple Church. But when she was downsized from her job in 2008, the longtime instructor became a patient.

"After my insurance lapsed, I wanted to be prideful and do everything out of pocket, but I soon realized money won't cover everything," says the 62-year-old. "And, of course, my chronic hypertension wasn't going away."

Having spent her whole life surrounded by the world of health care—from dealing with her own personal health issues as a child to witnessing her parents' struggles later in life—Gladys knew the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. But as other stresses in her life became more pronounced, her health took a back seat.

"My numbers were all out of whack," she says.

So, Gladys sought help at the very clinic she had long worked as an educator. Walking in the front door and being greeted with familiar faces immediately put Gladys at ease. There she met with a nurse who ran some tests, talked with her about the issues she faced, how to get them under control and suggested some medication along with lifestyle changes.

Gladys still makes regular trips to the clinic once a month, and her blood pressure numbers are now "near miraculous," she says.

"They're so well-controlled that when we did the blood pressure screenings at church I thought something was wrong. No way could my numbers be this good," Gladys says, adding, "There are no words to express how important these clinics are in the community."



Photo submitted by Columbia St. Mary's Inc.

Columbia St. Mary's, Inc., Milwaukee

## Community Outreach Health Clinic: Quality Care for the Uninsured

Joshua Sedgwick, 30, works all day as a mechanic, but that doesn't stop him from restoring old cars after hours. He was grinding an exhaust pipe from a rusty car at home in Menomonee Falls one summer evening when a metal fragment flew into his eye. He went to work the next day, thinking the pain would diminish, but when he came home from work there was no improvement. As the evening wore on and the pain continued, he realized he needed medical attention.

As an employee at a small company, Joshua doesn't have health insurance. For nearly one in 10 Wisconsin residents without insurance, seeking medical care can be a complicated and costly challenge. Joshua recalled going to the Community Outreach Health Clinic two years ago with a back problem and having a positive experience. The Outreach Clinic operates out of the Outpatient Care Center at Community Memorial Hospital on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, just a few blocks from Joshua's home.

When his wife called the clinic, staff and volunteers were winding down for the evening. Nurse Practitioner and Clinic Director Linda Smith could tell the situation was urgent, and waited for Joshua and his wife to arrive. After assessing Joshua's condition, Linda was able to remove the fragment without a trip to the ED.

"It was obviously a big relief to Joshua – he hugged me and the volunteer after the procedure!" said Linda. "We gave him some medication to prevent infection and he was able to go home."

Joshua is thankful the Outreach Clinic was there to care for him when he needed help quickly.

"They stayed open after hours for us and everyone was so helpful and pleasant, and gave me first-rate care," he said. "I would definitely recommend the Outreach Clinic to anyone in a similar situation."

Since 2000, the Community Outreach Health Clinic has provided quality, affordable health and wellness care to uninsured and underinsured residents of Waukesha, Washington and northwest Milwaukee Counties. Many patients have chronic conditions requiring ongoing monitoring and medications to manage their illness and prevent unnecessary hospitalizations. Others, like Joshua, are able to have their medical problem addressed with one visit. Clinic services are made possible through hundreds of hours of care donated by professional and administrative volunteers, the support of Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Community Memorial Hospital and generous community donations.

Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls

## The Living Healthy Community Clinic

The Living Healthy Community Clinic (LHCC) is a free standing community clinic operated by the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh College of Nursing. LHCC leverages its relationships with community partners to provide free access to primary care services for underserved people in the Winnebago County.

Aurora Medical Center Oshkosh has a long history of supporting LHCC. Most recently, in 2014, two grants given to LHCC through the Aurora Better Together Fund were provided to increase access to medical services for uninsured and underinsured residents as well as establish integrated behavioral health services at its primary care clinic.

Mike's story illustrates how the clinic plays a role in keeping Winnebago County residents well:

56-year-old Mike found himself experiencing major stress due to situations beyond his control. This, combined with a lifetime of poor lifestyle choices, caused episodes of chest pain. When Mike arrived at LHCC for help, he received a medical examination that revealed no immediate danger, however, the nurse practitioner that examined Mike recommended he start working out to help prevent a future cardiac episode from developing.

Mike did not receive the advice well at first, but when he returned to the clinic months later for a follow-up appointment, he told his nurse he had taken her advice and was in an exercise program. His increased activity has reduced his stress and his risk for a cardiac episode.

As Mike told the staff, "thank you for the successful cardiac invention-because of it I'm still alive!"

Aurora Medical Center Oshkosh



Photo submitted by Aurora Medical Center in Summit

## Lake Area Free Clinic

Scott is someone who knows too well how a free clinic can quickly become a lifeline.

Scott was a corporate trainer, making a good living, until he suddenly lost his job and his insurance due to company cut backs. Being over 300 pounds and a diabetic with high blood pressure, he needed medication, but could no longer afford its cost of \$250 per month. He felt desperate and ashamed.

Even though he was nervous about walking through Lake Area Free Clinic's (L AFC) door for the first time, Scott was greeted with a warm welcome, just like any clinic he visited in the past. The clinic volunteers quickly erased the "free clinic" stigma that Scott believed to be true and he knew immediately that he was in the best place to get the medical help he needed. Soon after his initial visit, Scott began receiving mental health counseling, help with managing his diabetes, and he even began attending the diabetic support group.

Today, thanks to the clinic's help, Scott is 60lbs lighter, his diabetes and blood pressure are under control, and he is once again working and insured.

In Scott's own words: "When you are out of work, people think you just need to get a job, but it's deeper than that. Your mind can be affected and it has a spiral effect: your focus isn't good, your energy is not where it needs to be, you're not on your game and you don't come across well to others. I have come out the other side of needing the services of a free clinic, and I am very grateful!"

L AFC has been a safety net clinic for Waukesha County residents since 2001. The clinic provides care to uninsured residents who have medical needs but are unable to pay for medical care. In 2014, the clinic's 220 volunteers provided over 14,000 volunteer hours. These volunteer hours helped the clinic accommodate 333 patient visits each month.

Aurora Medical Center Summit supports the clinic's operations by providing CT and MRI imaging services for patients referred by L AFC, which are vital in the clinic's ability to properly diagnose its patients. In 2014, the clinic also received \$94,794 through the Aurora Better Together Fund to expand clinic programs related to primary care and behavioral health services.

Aurora Medical Center Summit



Ashley Lorenzen counsels a patient at the Saint Vincent De Paul Free Health Clinic

## Saint Vincent De Paul Free Clinic

For many people taking medications, it's not always easy to understand how and why medications are taken and consequences of not taking medications. For the underinsured or uninsured, those challenges can be exacerbated.

Pharmacists now play a larger role at the Saint Vincent De Paul Free Clinic in Marshfield, Wisconsin, serving as a vital member of the health care team.

"The patients enjoy talking to us, we're sometimes a little less intimidating than a physician," said Ashley Lorenzen, PharmD, Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Concordia University School of Pharmacy and clinical pharmacist at Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital.

"The process takes a little extra time, but we are able to obtain valuable information for the physician and provide education and counseling for the patients—something they didn't receive before our increased involvement. It's important that they know why the medications are needed, and how to take them correctly so they can be positive advocates for their own health."

Lorenzen, who was instrumental in advancing the pharmacist role at the clinic, gave an example of how one gentleman benefitted from the service.

"One patient came to the clinic with high blood pressure. We started him on a combination blood pressure medication and an aspirin for heart protection," she said. "We also gave him a blood pressure monitor and asked him to take his blood pressure once a day at different times."

The patient came back a month later, with his blood pressure log, wanting to make sure he was doing things correctly, since his blood pressure was highest at the end of the day.

"He told us he was taking the medication just before bed, and in looking at his log, we advised him to try taking it with his breakfast, so it would affect his blood pressure at the end of the day," Lorenzen said. "He was very thankful for our service. It's nice to see patients who want to improve their health. When we can provide something as simple as a blood pressure cuff and two medications that can help them get better, that's what makes our job rewarding."

Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield

## The Bread of Healing Clinic

The Bread of Healing (BOH) Clinic provides vital health services to people without health insurance at three community-based sites on Milwaukee's north side. In 2014 BOH provided 6,933 clinic visits, of which 406 were first-time BOH patients. Aurora Sinai Medical Center provides essential financial support and diagnostic lab and imaging services for patients referred by BOH and medical care through Aurora's Specialty Access to Uninsured Program.

Ana was referred to the Bread of Healing clinic by one of our parish nurses, Linda. Through conversation over the phone, Linda discovered that Ana hadn't had any recent health care and suggested Ana visit the BOH clinic just to make sure she was indeed in good health as she thought she was.

When Ana arrived to the clinic, the nurse practitioner took her blood pressure, which was elevated, and discovered Ana's blood sugar level was over 400. The nurse practitioner immediately gave Ana insulin to regulate her blood sugar, provided her with a prescription. She also suggested Ana attend the upcoming Living Healthy with Diabetes session being offered at the church where BOH is located to learn to manage her new diabetes diagnosis.

Ana has learned how to successfully control her diabetes symptoms and is now managing her diagnosis well on her own with help from the BOH volunteer staff.

*"I'm almost certain that our discovery of Ana's diabetes and our ability to help her manage it prevented a dangerous situation for Ana, which likely would have resulted a trip to the hospital emergency department."* – Linda, Aurora Health Care Parish Nurse

Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee



Rosa meeting with her diabetes educator at 16th Street Community Health Center

## Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers

Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers operates five clinic locations, where employees provide high quality health care, health education and social services to approximately 36,000 low-income and culturally diverse residents of southeastern Wisconsin each year. Comprehensive health services include adult and pediatric medicine, behavioral health services, women's health, HIV prevention and treatment and physical and occupational therapy.

The clinic focuses on reaching people like Rosa who had not been to the doctor in over two years before she arrived at the clinic for the first time in 2012. At that time, Rosa's blood sugar was off the charts due to Type II diabetes, which Rosa had been unaware of for about 10 years. Eida, the clinic's diabetes educator, has been working with Rosa ever since, teaching her how to administer her own insulin, take her own blood sugar, and how to react to highs and lows in order to manage her diabetes on her own.

Aurora Health Care and has a long history in partnering with the clinic.

Most recently in 2015, Aurora Health Care's Better Together fund provided two separate one-time grants totaling \$1,000,000, which will allow expansion of medical and mental health services and integration of those services for the clinic's patients.

"Once you get here, they have so much to offer: kindness, compassion, caring. It doesn't matter who you are, when you walk through that door, it's like you are part of the 16th street family, and you are going to get some quality care." – Rosa

Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee

## Putting Their Money Where Their Mouth Is: Ministry's Dental Clinic Provides Needed Care for Community

For many, picking up the phone to make a dental appointment is part of a regular health routine. But for individuals who are underinsured, seeing a dentist can be challenging. Since 1999, the Ministry Door County Medical Center (MDCMC) Dental Clinic has been providing dental services to people in Door and Kewaunee counties. Last year, more than 3,000 patients were served.

Dental care is one of the top three needs identified by MDCMC through its community health needs assessment. "We know more and more about the connection of oral health to overall health," says Tanya Fischer, clinic director. "We know it's connected to heart health, and we know that kids in school who have chronic tooth pain have a hard time focusing and doing well academically."

The clinic sees an average of 20 patients per day. "We recently started seeing adults as well as youth," says Fischer, "and that has opened up a whole new area of need for us. Before that, low-income patients had to travel all the way to Milwaukee for dental care. The unmet need was huge."

Dentist Patti Sigl understands the need for early intervention in children's oral health. "If we can help get kids on a track to healthy gums and teeth, it eliminates so much disease and pain later in life," she says. "We focus on prevention with our younger patients, and help them get in the habit of good dental care." Part of this effort is participation in the Seal-A-Smile program, in which clinic staff travels to local schools to provide dental sealants to children on site.

Fischer tells of one young patient who came to the clinic with multiple cavities and severe discomfort. "Within two appointments, we were able to turn things around for this young girl," she says. "Later we received a handwritten note from her grandfather calling Patti an 'angel' dentist."

Dr. Sigl is proud to be part of a team that provides a much-needed service to the community. "We've helped reduce the number of urgent care and emergency room visits in the community due to dental emergencies. And every day, we hear from our patients that they are so happy and relieved to finally have a place to come for dental care."

Ministry Door County Medical Center, Sturgeon Bay

## Surrounded By Smiles

Nearly 2,000 patients received free dental care at the Wisconsin Dental Association's Mission of Mercy at the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds. This free clinic provided extractions, fillings, dentures and cleanings. This expert care was provided by more than 1,000 volunteers. Pharmacists and pharmacy associates from Agnesian HealthCare's retail and hospital pharmacy departments partnered together to supply medications to patients after dental procedures.

"It was an honor for Agnesian to play a role in this charitable event and partner with dentists and other professionals to fill the gaps in care to those in need," says Nancy Hyland, director of retail pharmacy services.

Agnesian HealthCare, Fond du Lac

## Community Smiles for Dental Care Initiatives

The NEW Dental Clinic on the campus of Northeast Wisconsin Technical College continues to serve low income or uninsured people in Brown County by providing dental services close to home. In spring 2013, HSHS St. Vincent and HSHS St. Mary's Hospitals donated funds that allowed the clinic to double its capacity. The six-chair dental clinic operates year round, Monday through Friday. In the last year, volunteer oral surgeons started seeing patients one half day per week. For the first half of 2015, the oral surgeons held 23 clinic dates, where they saw 211 patients and completed 588 extractions and four oral surgeries. This was made possible thanks to additional funding from HSHS St. Vincent and St. Mary's Hospitals to purchase the equipment needed for procedures in the clinic.

When reflecting on the work at the NEW Community Clinic dental clinic, one of the oral surgeons remarked, "It is refreshing to finally begin addressing the oral surgery needs of an underserved population in the greater Green Bay area. We have noticed a positive impact of the program over the last six months or so with a decrease in the frequency of patients going to emergency departments at the local hospitals for emergency dental care. Additionally at each treatment session we get the personal satisfaction of serving patients who are genuinely grateful for care they have received for much needed oral surgery problems."

The Brown County Oral Health Partnership (OHP) operates a unique school-based oral health program for children and youth in the Green Bay Area Public School District who are uninsured, but qualify for the free or reduced lunch program at their schools. The hospitals support OHP by providing equipment to expand preventive services in the schools. OHP dental professionals travel with the portable dental equipment to high risk schools and provide a range of services including dental exams, cleaning, topical fluoride treatments and sealants.

These continued efforts are making a difference and help bring smiles to the faces of people as they work to improve their oral and overall health.

HSHS St. Vincent Hospital and HSHS St. Mary's Hospital, Green Bay



Photo submitted by Columbia St. Mary's Inc.

### John and the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Dental Clinic

John found out the hard way that having a manufacturing job for 22 years was no guarantee of ongoing employment. Or income. Or insurance.

When changes in the economy led to the disappearance of work in his industry, John suddenly found himself out of a job. As John thought about his future, he figured trucking would be an industry that could not be outsourced. So he began to take classes and prepare for the CDL trucking exam that would allow him to head down the road of a new career.

Then the horrible tooth pain started. The gums under his dental bridge had become swollen and painful.

"When you have little income and no insurance, you turn to the Internet to find dental care," says John.

He and his wife searched for dentists who would accept new patients without insurance and limited ability to offer a down payment. He also hoped

for an appointment within a few weeks, so he could continue to study and focus on his trucking exam. For several days, he had no luck.

Then his wife discovered the website for the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Dental Clinic, a United Way funded agency sponsored by Columbia St. Mary's. He could be seen at the Urgent Care the very next morning.

The dentist confirmed the source of his pain – an abscess had developed under his bridge. A week of antibiotics was needed to first reduce the infection and swelling. With the swelling reduced, the dentist extracted the tooth, and John was able to take and pass his CVL exam.

John was thankful not only for the relief of pain, but for the compassionate and convenient care he received at the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Dental Clinic.

"When you have such pain, you are always aware of it and you hesitate to smile or talk normally," he says. "When the pain is gone, you can return to smiling and talking freely."

John believes that with his oral health and confidence restored, he will be able to find a job and return to solid employment, insurance and a healthy career.

Columbia-St. Mary's Inc., Milwaukee

## Lakeshore Community Dental Clinic brings dental care to those in need

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital has been a community partner and supporter of the Lakeshore Community Health Center (LCHC) from the planning stages to its designation as a Federally Qualified Health Center. The LCHC consists of a dental clinic at one location and medical, behavioral care and administrative services at another.

In 2014, dentists at the LCHC provided dental services to almost 3,000 patients with over 8,000 encounters.

Oral health continues to be one of the largest areas of services. Starting in the 2015-16 school year, the LCHC will expand their school-based dental in the Sheboygan Area School District (SASD) by offering full restorative dentistry. It also offered a sealant program in the SASD schools for the 2014-2015 school year.

The health center is in the process of purchasing a new facility, where all services can be offered in one location. They closed on the loan for a building and began construction. The plan is to move into it in phases starting in fall 2015 with Phase I. Phase I will include the medical, behavioral and administrative services. The dental clinic will move afterwards.

In conversations with the staff at the LCHC, additional equipment was needed to provide these services within our community. HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital provided funding to purchase:

- A water distillation system for sterilization
- A water dispensing gun
- Hygiene instruments
- A portable Cavitron for hygiene
- A hydraulic, portable dental chair
- A portable dental operator's stool and case
- A sterilizer

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital also donated \$10,000 to the capital campaign for the expansion of dental services.

Rather than going to the emergency room for dental pain and issues, now community members can visit the dental clinic. Its most valuable benefit is that it provides access to dental care in the right setting—to those who wouldn't be able to get it otherwise.

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan



Photo submitted by St. Mary's Hospital, Madison

## Hospitals Connecting with Their Communities

Hospitals have never let the boundaries of their campuses define their level of engagement with the community. Hospitals are a part of the fabric of the community, and as such, use their human and financial resources to focus on factors that not only improve people's health status, but also create a healthier environment to live, work and play.

### Getting FIT: Diet & Exercise for Middle Schoolers

One in 10 children from ages two to five will become obese. Five percent of six- to eleven-year-olds are severely obese. Edgerton Hospital and Health Services' community needs assessment identified it as one of the key action items to address.

In the first trimester of the 2013-2014 school year, representatives from the hospital, along with the former principal at Edgerton middle school, conducted a pilot of a Fitbit program that involved eight to ten sixth graders selected by the principal.

"The pilot group included a mixture of athletes, non-athletes and at-risk students," says Lisa Rebman, community education manager for Edgerton Hospital. "Our goal was to show these children the importance of physical activity and also that it doesn't require playing a sport."



Photo submitted by Edgerton Hospital

The program was hosted through a class where the kids met daily with an Edgerton Middle School teacher. Then, once a week, an Edgerton Hospital guest would come in and teach a class based on one of four themes: physical activity, nutrition, hydration and sleep.

Pre-tests were conducted using questions based on these four areas. From these evaluations, the program organizers found many of the students weren't drinking enough water and were also complaining of recurring headaches (most likely the result of dehydration). In addition, many of the students were not getting enough physical activity or sleep.

Following the pre-tests, each participating student received a Fitbit from Edgerton Hospital so they could track steps, distance and calories as well as log food intake and measure sleep patterns.

After the pilot, the middle school principal, teachers and school district board implemented Edgerton Hospital's Fitbit program as a flex class option available each trimester to all sixth graders.

Edgerton Hospital and Health Services

## Reducing Type 2 Diabetes

St. Mary's Hospital Madison (SMHM) has a rich history of finding creative and effective ways to engage our community to improve health; 2015 was no exception. As part of an overarching effort to reduce the incidence of Type 2 Diabetes, SMHM sought out opportunities to integrate education into practical application in an early preventive approach to reducing the burden of obesity in our young children.

Through partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, Neighborhood House Community Center and The Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation/Kegonsa Elementary School, SMHM engaged children in activities designed to increase awareness about what constitutes a healthy body and apply that knowledge in practical terms while planting, harvesting and preparing meals and snacks using fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs from their gardens.

In addition, Kegonsa Elementary School children were able to take what they grew and help local families in need by donating over 500 pounds of fresh produce to the food pantry. The children planned to donate 350 pounds of produce this year and are on track to donate nearly 550 pounds, extending the value of this project beyond just what the students "learn" to being socially active and aware young people.

St. Mary's Hospital Madison



Photo submitted by St. Mary's Hospital, Madison

## Hospital-Supported Initiatives – Access to Healthy Foods

Food deserts are defined as parts of the community lacking of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores and healthy food providers.

A person living in poverty can find it difficult to locate healthy and nutritious food options that would allow for a healthy lifestyle. Due to these challenges, Columbia St. Mary's recognized an opportunity to promote healthy eating, nutrition and food access by partnering with Fondy Farmers Market. The partnership allows for healthy food access, health education and screening to hundreds of market customers.

Columbia St. Mary's associates engage people to discuss health education and health screening activities—blood pressure screening, blood glucose screening, oral health education, advance directives, insurance education and enrollment, among other health literacy topics. The open-air market creates space for healthy food demonstrations, nutrition education and for the community to connect with each other on health topics.

To date over 2,000 people in the local community have been positively impacted by the services offered by various hospital departments. As one market attendee stated, "Thank you for being involved in the community and keeping the community healthy."

Columbia St. Mary's, Inc., Milwaukee

## Cooking Demonstrations Showcase Connection of Lincoln County Nutrition Coalition



Meghan Young-Williams, Nutrition Educator, Lincoln County UW-Extension, and Jane Bentz hand out a salad shooter to Food Pantry Participant Evelynn Dodd.

Over the past year, the Lincoln County Nutrition Coalition has been making a deeper connection to those in need in the Merrill Community. Coalition members have conducted more than a dozen cooking demonstrations with people who receive support from the Merrill Community Food Pantry, Comunidad Hispania, Head Start Program and the Wisconsin Infants and Children Program (WIC).

"After holding our initial sessions with the Food Pantry, we were excited to expand this offer to clients of other support organizations in our community," said Jane Bentz, foundation and community outreach director at Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center. "This effort has opened the door to additional families, many with children who are benefiting from the gift of these appliances and valuable nutrition information."

The programs were started with a goal of enhancing the Food Pantry experience and establishing healthy habits among those who rely on its services. Since its launch in May of 2014, more than 400 attendees of these programs increased their knowledge with healthy recipes and hands-on demonstrations.

Each session was centered on a specific kitchen appliance that was provided to participants by Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center. Armed with crock pots, electric fry pans and griddles, a turkey roaster and meat thermometer or salad shooter, attendees were able to learn new recipes and increase healthy choice options with items received from the Food Pantry. Bentz adds that the move of the Food Pantry and other organizations to the Menard Outreach Center on the Ministry Good Samaritan Campus has strengthened the connection between Merrill's hospital and the community.

"The establishment of the Menard Outreach Center has allowed us to expand these offerings in an improved space that provides better access and more space to allow additional participants at each session," said Bentz. "It will be exciting to build on the momentum of the past year as we continue our efforts at the Menard Resource Center to serve those in need in our community."

Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill



## Community Health Needs Assessment: Diabetes

The Dane County Community Health Needs Assessment shows that the diabetes health outcomes for African Americans are much worse than the county's white population. In order to help the community improve these outcomes, Meriter partnered with a community organization, the Allied Wellness Center, as well as a grassroots group, Mothers in the Neighborhood, to understand some of the community's needs.

The Allied Wellness Center and Mothers in the Neighborhood serve the Allied Drive Neighborhood, an ethnically diverse, low-income community. The Allied Wellness Center provides social support, assistance with medical co-pays, transportation to medical appointments and health information education, and Mothers in the Neighborhood is a social support group that engages in community projects. Once understanding some of the barriers facing the community, Meriter connected the Wellness Center and Mothers in the Neighborhood to the American Diabetes Association to identify and train community members on an American Diabetes Association educational program known as Project Power. Once trained, community members facilitated community classes on awareness about Type 2 diabetes, and how individuals can help manage or even prevent diabetes through diet and exercise.

Meriter supports the program in a number of ways, including providing content experts to answer questions. One of the most popular experts is a dietician who helps prepares recipes from an American Diabetes Association cookbook, giving residents an opportunity to taste recipes before trying at home and learn how to make little tweaks to recipes.

"So many people in my family have diabetes," says Carmela a program participant, "I want to learn what I can do to help keep myself healthy. And, these classes have given me information that I can share with my family, so that they can be healthier."

Not only is Carmela grateful for the information she has learned but she is also pleased that the class is run by community members.

"Experts can provide a lot, but I really liked that our own community members led the class. We are helping each other live healthier lives. Meriter has made this possible. "

Meriter-UnityPoint Health, Madison

## Continual Education is Key to Living Well!

At Berlin Memorial Hospital, a rural critical access hospital, general wellness and physical activity are a stand-out in their Community Health Needs Assessment. On September 30, 2015, the 16th annual "Night Out for Women's Health" event took place—a venue that attracts over 300 women of all ages to learn about improving their health and well-being. Topics through the years range from heart health, personal safety, urology, physical activity, financial wellness, stress relief, and many more.



Women's Night Out participants

Along with professional speakers addressing the event topic, over 25 vendors were there displaying their health-related items, offering education, or giving hands-on demonstrations. Attendees were armed with a wealth of information by the end of the evening.

One attendee listened intently to the cardiologist's presentation, had a personal conversation with the doctor at the event, made herself an appointment, only to discover she had severe blockage of her arteries. She claims the information presented at the Night Out for Women's Health saved her life.

Health care education is key. We make it understandable, continual, and even sometimes humorous to show the importance of living well every day.

Berlin Memorial Hospital

## Fun with A Focus: A Camp That Cares

"So much of our health can be controlled by the choices we make in our everyday lives," says Lacey Bruce, a Ripon Medical Center exercise physiologist.

When kids learn how to make healthy choices, they can set themselves up for a healthy and active life. That's what healthYouth Summer Active Camp is all about. At camp, kids learn how to make healthy meals and play fun, active games, all while setting both activity and dietary goals for themselves each week.

"There is such a huge need in the community and all across the world to fight childhood obesity, and I'm proud we can offer this camp in Ripon," says Riann Collar, exercise physiologist.

Ripon Medical Center, Ripon

## Hospitals Help Satisfy Community Need for Proper Nutrition

This year, thousands of low-income families in Brown County received greater access to healthy, fresh and locally-grown foods thanks to HSHS St. Vincent Hospital, HSHS St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center and LIVE54218—a non-profit organization that aims to make the Greater Green Bay Area the healthiest community in the nation.

In 2014, LIVE54218 collaborated with a variety of community partners to implement the "Double Your Bucks" program at three farmers' markets in the Greater Green Bay Area. The program doubles the first ten dollars FoodShare users spend on fresh produce and is meant to help those on government assistance increase their fresh fruit and vegetable intake. In its first year, "Double Your Bucks" proved successful, with 81 percent of surveyed Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card users responding that they are eating or plan to eat more fruit and vegetables.

LIVE54218's survey of 139 EBT card users in 2014 revealed some positive and inspiring feedback on how the program benefits area families. Some of the responses included:

*"Even though I can't provide my kids with much, at least now I can provide them with healthy food."*

*"There's nothing better than getting fresh produce, fresh vegetables and fruits for your kids."*

*"I finally feel like I am not judged by swiping my FoodShare card. I feel like everyone else now."*

When LIVE54218 expressed the need for funding to offer "Double Your Bucks" to low-income families again in 2015, HSHS St. Vincent Hospital and HSHS St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center stepped in with an \$18,000 donation. The money not only allowed "Double Your Bucks" to continue at two major Green Bay farmers' markets and the Oneida Nations Farmers Market in 2015, but also expanded the program to a farmers' market in the city of De Pere.

The "Double Your Bucks" program has a tremendous impact on those who rely on government assistance for food. FoodShare customers are reporting that they are consuming healthier foods and providing more fresh fruits and vegetables for their families, too.

HSHS St. Vincent Hospital and HSHS St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay

## Farm Camps, Gardening Programs Connect Families to Healthy Foods and Fun



Photo submitted by Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare

A 2013 community health needs assessment identified obesity as a key issue for the greater La Crosse region, where the adult obesity rate increased by 16 percent between 2008 and 2013. About 35 percent of adults in the region are overweight and nearly 30 percent are obese.

"Research confirms that children who learn to grow their own foods are more interested in eating healthy foods," says Teri Wildt, director of community engagement at Mayo Clinic Health System - Franciscan Healthcare in La Crosse. The organization is committed to encouraging people to grow, eat and prepare whole, natural foods to support good health.

### Partnering to create "growing enthusiasm"

In 2015, more than 1,000 children attended farm camps and field trips to help plant, tend and harvest gardens and care for farm animals at Deep Roots Community Farm. They also had time to play and discover in open nature space. The farm, which uses sustainable and organic practices to produce grass-fed beef, vegetables, fruit and flowers, encourages community involvement to



Photo submitted by Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare

promote living simply and raising healthy, happy children.

The farm camps and field trips are offered through GROW La Crosse, a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting children to healthy food and nature. Participation is fee-based, but grants and donations also allow children who are unable to afford the fees to attend. GROW La Crosse also hosts gardens and gardening programs in area schools.

Mayo Clinic Health System - Franciscan Healthcare supports both efforts through its partnership with GROW La Crosse.

"We like that GROW La Crosse takes a hands-on approach to showing kids how the foods they eat are grown."

The medical organization relies on partnerships as the best way to share the joys of gardening and the benefits of consuming fresh, healthy foods with people across the region. Other collaborations include community gardens, vermicomposting (composting with worms), edible landscape displays, square foot (small space) gardening education, and a horticulture education center. A mobile teaching kitchen allows Mayo Clinic Health System - Franciscan Healthcare experts to teach families how to use fresh foods to create delicious, easy meals.

Mayo Clinic Health System — Franciscan Healthcare in La Crosse

## Community Health Needs Assessment: Obesity

With the completion of its first Community Health Needs Assessment in 2013, three priorities in Jackson County were identified: access to health care services, obesity/nutrition/diabetes and alcohol/tobacco/and other drug abuse. Black River Memorial Hospital (BRMH) is part of a collaboration in the area to combat obesity, poor nutrition and diabetes.

Jackson County ranks as one of the least healthy in the state and reports having 31 percent of adults with a BMI=30, which exceeds both the state (29 percent) and national (25 percent) statistics. Twenty percent reported no regular physical activity in 2014, and 14 percent of Jackson County residents have limited access to healthy foods compared to the state average of 8.3 percent (County Health Rankings).



"And they're off!" Jackson In Action Pace and Pedal participants are taking off during the 2015 event held at Wazee Lake Recreation Area in Jackson County.

In addition, approximately 75 percent of Jackson County is recognized as a Food Desert, with residents having low-income and low access to supermarkets. The Jackson County 2014 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) shows that 50.5 percent of high school students surveyed are trying to lose weight, and 17.3 percent reported they felt their health was fair to poor.

In response to these grim statistics, partnerships with other area organizations have assisted in bringing our County Health Rankings from 69 out of 72 counties to 66 in four years. While this is not a huge improvement, we are steadily making progress.

One organization in particular that BRMH works with to improve the incidence of obesity is Jackson In Action (JIA) ([www.jacksoninaction.org](http://www.jacksoninaction.org)), a coalition formed in 2011 that functions under the umbrella of Together For Jackson County Kids. Coalition members include BRMH, Jackson County UW Extension, Jackson County Public Health, Ho-Chunk Nation and Black River Falls and Alma Center/Merrillan School Districts. Since its inception, JIA has established the Harvest of the Month (HOM) initiative and raises awareness of healthy harvest items every month. These healthy options include fruits and vegetables and the program encourages community members and families to try new food items and recipes. Several organizations have implemented HOM. This program positively affects thousands of people in Jackson County.

JIA has also hosted several physical activity events, one of which is the Pace & Pedal Duathlon. This event includes a 5.5-mile trail run with a 10-mile bike race. Other races held during this event include a 2.7-mile fun run/walk and a 1.1-mile youth race. As a coalition partner, BRMH provides leadership in this event that includes advice from registered dietitians, athletic/physical fitness trainers and hospital staff who help plan and work at the event. Not only does BRMH donate staff time to this event; funds are provided for supplies and infrastructure.

A collaboration of agencies and organizations can result in a much greater impact than any one group alone. We in Jackson County have laid the foundation to positively affect the health of our citizens. BRMH's efforts with Jackson In Action is just one initiative in Jackson County helping to make our area a healthier place to live.

Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls

## Community Health Needs Assessment: Obesity

From our last Community Health Needs Assessment, obesity ranked among the top concern in our community. Because obesity is a complex issue, we felt it was important to offer opportunities for both physical activity and nutrition to those in our community. In spring of 2015, a community Couch to 5K program was launched. Participants were given training programs, offered the opportunity to work with a health coach and could participate in weekly training group opportunities as well as education sessions. With over 290 participants partaking in the program, we had great results.

"I have tried the Couch to 5K program on my own several times over the past six years or so, but having a group approach was the way I kept my motivation. Weekly presentations on stretching, shoe choice, how to and not to run a first 5K were the ticket to my succeeding in my first-ever 5K. I felt fantastic after completing the run. I am now signed up for two more runs and am excited to improve my speed, stamina and placement. While I never classified myself as athletic, I feel more confident now when I do run."

In conjunction with the Couch to 5K program, a community-wide farmers market was run on the grounds of the hospital, with the goal of increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. An education booth provided healthy recipes and education. EBT for Food Share participants was offered at the market, as a way to expand the reach of community members we served. Partnering with the farmers at the market, we were able to pilot a Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program this year. Through this program, pediatricians were able to prescribe fruits and vegetables to their patients, ages 2-16. Patients could then redeem the prescription at the market for \$10 in tokens to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. Children enjoyed receiving the tokens and being able to pick out their favorite fruits and vegetables at the market. It is our hope to expand this program to more of our community next year.

Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau

## Life of an Athlete

The key to a healthy and happy future is making smart lifestyle choices. The younger a person is when he or she learns this lesson the better. That's why Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics contributed nearly \$8,800 as well as donated hours of time and labor toward bringing the Life of an Athlete program to Taylor County in March 2015.

Led by Olympic Trainer and Navy SEAL Human Performance Consultant John Underwood, the Life of an Athlete program stresses the importance of making smart decisions to improve academic and athletic performance. The program teaches why and how getting proper sleep and nutrition, limiting use of energy drinks and over-stimulating technology, making time for recovery, managing stress, and avoiding the use and abuse of social drugs like alcohol and marijuana can make someone a better student and athlete.

When embraced by student athletes, Life of an Athlete lessons are typically adopted by the rest of the student body as well, expanding the positive influence of the program well beyond children who participate in sports.

Hundreds of high school athletes, coaches, school and community leaders, and parents from Medford, Gilman, Rib Lake, Abbotsford, Prentice, and Phillips took part in the program. Some students and coaches from Lakeland, Marshfield, Osseo-Fairchild, DC Everest, Neillsville, and Eau Claire schools also took part. It's estimated that over 800 residents in Taylor County alone heard Underwood's message.

Taylor County Drug Opposition Partners was also a major sponsor of the program. Other proud contributors included the Medford Senior High Student Council, Taylor County Lions and Lioness Clubs, Medford Kiwanis, and Medford Rotary Club.

Physical activity, nutrition, and substance abuse are among the community health needs identified in Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics' Community Health Needs Assessment.

Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics



Students listen to John Underwood present the Life of an Athlete program.



Kevin with Dietitian Emily Grimes, after a successful weigh-in.

## Healthy 4 Life with Health 4U

High blood pressure. Type 2 diabetes. These were two of the medical reasons Kevin Hegg decided to enroll in Reedsburg Area Medical Center's (RAMC) Health 4U program. But the bigger reason Kevin says, "I have a wife and two young kids, and I needed to improve my health for them."

So in January 2015, Kevin attended his first Health 4U class. This six-month program provides participants with useful nutrition and health education to help them make lifestyle changes.

"One of the big takeaways for me was truly understanding food better—what's really in the things I eat, ways to portion control and how to make better choices," Kevin says.

In addition to in-person classes, Health 4U participants have access to one-on-one consultations to develop individualized exercise and nutrition plans, healthy meal cooking demonstrations, and assistance with maintaining a food and exercise log.

Kevin also found that the group atmosphere provided a great support system because everyone is facing the same challenges and has similar goals, whether it's losing weight or reversing the effects of a medical condition like diabetes. Plus, the instructors are always willing to answer questions and offer guidance and motivation.

"Since I completed the Health 4U program, I've stopped taking my blood pressure medication, reduced the number of diabetes medications I need and just have so much more stamina and energy throughout the day," Kevin says. "It really gave me a better outlook on life."

Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg

## Taking the Weight Off

In the summer of 2015, over 2,000 people in the Fox Cities made a commitment to active living, a challenge sponsored by Weight of the Fox Valley (WOTFV).

Weight of the Fox Valley, a three-county (Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago) initiative, is working to get people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight at every age. The organization was established in 2013 after a two-day summit involving residents concerned about the rise in obesity. The event was sponsored by the Fox Valley HealthCare Coalition, Oshkosh and Fox Cities United Ways, and ThedaCare's Community Health Action Team, or CHAT. ThedaCare includes Appleton Medical Center and Theda Clark Medical Center.

"Weight of the Fox Valley is about increasing the number of people in the Valley to live at a healthy BMI, or body mass index," said Paula Morgen, community health manager, ThedaCare, who serves on WOTFV leadership and teams. "Reducing obesity is the goal."

In June, *Passport to Active Living* launched. Participants were given a passport, which they stamped for any 15 minutes of activity completed. After six weeks, they earn a small prize. After 12 weeks, they can win a grand prize.

"A lot of people are doing the passport," said Keren Rosenberg, program manager, WOTFV.

A new action team was established this summer as well to encourage the consumption of fruit and vegetables. *Plus One* encourages adding one fruit or vegetable to daily consumption.

The organization reaches out to the community through weekly newsletters and developed a new website, [www.weightofthefoxvalley.org](http://www.weightofthefoxvalley.org), to provide health tips, information about the initiative, recipes and projects. And the group's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/WeightoftheFoxValley>, continues to grow in popularity. There are daily posts about things going on related to health as well as general information.

"Almost every day we have new people," said Rosenberg.

ThedaCare

## "Just Girls"

In March 2015, Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics presented a \$2,000 check to the Medford Area Public Schools for the purpose of equipping and starting a new physical fitness program for girls focused on building their physical strength, flexibility, stamina, and endurance.

"We found that many high school girls are intimidated by the weight room," says Dave Vaara, physical education teacher. "We wanted to provide them with an alternative means to develop lifelong physical fitness skills and training. With the funds that Aspirus Medford donated, we purchased the necessary equipment and developed a new fitness program for girls. Resistance band workouts were the answer."

Called "Just Girls," the new resistance band workout program is open to any girl in grades 7-12. Participating girls meet at the high school gym before school three days a week. There is no fee for program participants.

"Without [Aspirus], this new health and wellness program would not have been possible" Vaara says. "It's going to benefit hundreds of girls, maybe thousands, for their entire lifetime."

Physical activity is among the community health needs identified in Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics' Community Health Needs Assessment.

Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics



Members of the "Just Girls" fitness program and Dave Vaara, Medford Area Middle School physical education teacher, accepted the check on behalf of the Medford School District. Representatives from Aspirus included Susan Courtney, Stephanie Dray, Tyler Hack, and Catherine Leifeld.

## Barron Resident Finds Healthier Lifestyle from *Know Your Numbers* Screenings

Thrive Barron County hosted a free Know Your Numbers screening for area residents in 2014. One Barron resident, Dave Armstrong, attended the screening and found out how his fast-paced lifestyle was affecting his health. He calls the screening a “life-changing experience.”

“I wasn’t even thinking about that aspect of my health until the Know Your Numbers screening,” Armstrong says. “Then I realized I really didn’t feel well. I was tired all the time and wanted to know what I could change.”

The screening revealed an elevated number for Armstrong’s fasting glucose level, which led him to schedule a full physical with his doctor. He learned many ways to change his routine and decrease his high numbers.

Since the screening, Armstrong has made many lifestyle changes. By cutting down carbs and starches and taking the time to exercise, he has lost 25 pounds, and his glucose level has dropped from 199 to 125. His goal is to lose 100 pounds.

The screening was sponsored by Cumberland Healthcare, Lakeview Medical Center and Mayo Clinic Health System. These screenings were included: blood pressure, total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL, HDL, glucose, body fat and body mass index. Over 600 people participated in the screenings, and 198 had glucose results above the normal range. Those with elevated readings were encouraged to follow up with their health care provider.

Thrive Barron County is an evolving partnership between Barron County Public Health, area health systems, community members and business and education representatives. Through the group and community needs assessment conducted in 2012, the top three health priorities identified for Barron County were alcohol and other drugs, mental health and chronic disease. The Know Your Numbers screening is part of the action plan for chronic disease.

Cumberland Healthcare, Cumberland; Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake; Mayo Clinic Health System, Barron

## There is No Health Without Mental Health

One in five American adults suffers from a diagnosable mental health disorder, but less than one third of these people are getting the help they need. Combine this statistic with the 18,000 calls in the last two years to a La Crosse area hotline for mental health crisis intervention and the need for action is critical.

Better access to mental health care and more cost-effective mental health integration is a priority identified in preliminary results of the 2015 COMPASS NOW community needs assessment.

Gundersen Health System is integrating treatment for mental health into its continuum of care—from the construction of an inpatient facility on its main campus in La Crosse, to supporting primary care provider access to patients’ mental health records—but is also taking this care into the community.

Gundersen, along with more than 40 La Crosse area organizations, created a shared language for mental health and to break the stigma of mental health treatment. The “Change Direction” campaign encourages residents to care for their mental well being just as they do their physical well being. La Crosse was the first city in the nation introduced to this mental health initiative in 2015. (Learn more at [gundersenhealth.org/no-more-stigma](http://gundersenhealth.org/no-more-stigma).)

The community is learning and using the five signs of suffering—warning signs that someone is in emotional pain and might need help:

1. Withdrawal or isolating themselves from other people
2. Uncharacteristically angry, anxious or agitated
3. Overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances
4. Decline in personal care or engaging in risky behavior
5. Personality changes

Additionally, Great Rivers 2-1-1, a free, confidential, 24/7 information and crisis line, is being promoted as a community resource to more than 4,200 programs to support the Change Direction efforts. Residents know to dial 2-1-1 to receive help or information.

Gundersen is changing the conversation on mental health care to improve the health and well being of our patients and the communities we serve.

Gundersen Health System, La Crosse

## Community Health Needs Assessment: Mental Health

Memorial Medical Center (MMC) serves Clark County and has medical facilities in Neillsville, Loyal and Greenwood. MMC has identified mental health as one of its initiatives in the Community Health Needs Assessment. Through the mental health effort, multiple collaborative efforts were developed with both Clark County and the other hospital in the county by creating a Mental Health Task Force. Through the task force, one such collaborative effort put forth was offering the Train the Trainer program for the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training. This training is provided to community members to help identify individuals who might be suffering from depression or thoughts of suicide and connect them with potential support and resources. The session was completed, and 10 trainers are now working to implement the training to key groups of community members in Clark County. MMC helped to identify and develop support materials, has one staff person who is currently QPR trained, and is looking to have another individual complete the online QPR training. More than 100 people were in attendance at multiple QPR trainings. This will continue to help build awareness for both depression and suicide and impact community members with guidance for services when they might need it most.

Memorial Medical Center, Neillsville

## HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin: Teen Mental Health

In Chippewa Falls and neighboring Eau Claire, people are doing more than talking about teen suicide—they are taking action. Like many communities throughout Wisconsin, they have been touched by the loss of young lives due to suicide. But unlike other communities, these two have pulled together resources from HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital and HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, local schools, churches, health and social service agencies and others to address how to better recognize teens at risk, how to help them get the resources they need...how to save lives.



Photo submitted by HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital

A community gathering of 140 Chippewa Valley residents was held to discuss future education and health needs of students, with a special focus on mental health. As a result of that gathering, a daylong conference was held in June 2015 at the Chippewa Falls Middle School for professionals, parents and the public. Among others, sponsors of the free event were St. Joseph's and Sacred Heart hospitals and the Chippewa Falls School District. Presenters were local mental health professionals and David Walsh, nationally acclaimed author of "Why do They Act That Way?: A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen." More than 180 people attended the conference and another 60 people attended an abbreviated conference that evening. Media coverage helped spread

awareness of rising teen suicides in the area and resources that are growing to assist teens and parents. Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR), a technique used to help teen and adult suicide crisis was introduced and three training sessions were held at the conference for more than 65 participants.

Dialogue continues and more activities are forthcoming, including QPR training for all students next spring at Chippewa Falls Senior High School, and other local communities are requesting QPR training. Also, the Chippewa Falls School District was one of only several nationwide asked to present at the Studer Education Group national conference in Chicago in August. The school district shared its involvement in the summit and the overall community-wide effort to lower the incidence of teen suicide in the area.

HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls

## CHNA-Mental Health

Patients with a pressing mental health need are finding help at the Essentia Health St. Mary's-Superior Clinic in Superior.

A psychotherapist and a psychiatric nurse practitioner have been integrated into primary care teams to provide local residents greater access to mental health services. The need for such care was deemed the top priority in the 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment for Essentia Health St. Mary's Hospital-Superior.

To help address the need identified by its community, the hospital and its clinic first asked primary care teams to screen patients for depression and offer treatment. Now a behavioral health specialist and a psychiatric nurse practitioner are part of the family medicine and internal medicine care teams.

If a physician or another provider identifies a mental health issue during a patient's appointment, Therapist Marcia Domecq is asked to join them. The goal is to provide patients with immediate counseling and show how Domecq can help with issues such as depression, anxiety and stress.

"This integrated approach enables us to treat the issue right there—when the need is most pressing and when the patient will benefit most," says Domecq, who schedules follow-up appointments to provide short-term care. She serves as bridge to longer-term care and guides patients to mental health providers in the community.

Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Jaelyn Barney helps the team with diagnoses, treatment planning and medication management.

As part of the Community Health Needs Assessment, Essentia Health staff met regularly with representatives from local governments, law enforcement agencies and other mental health providers. The meetings, which have continued, created greater collaboration and broader goals for providing mental health services, says Terry Jacobson, chief operating officer and administrator for Essentia Health St. Mary's Hospital-Superior.

"Hosting that community group has helped us go from playing a minor role to a more integrated role," says Jacobson. "We now have mental health providers in our own clinic, and we're part of the solution."

Essentia Health St. Mary's Hospital-Superior

## Community Health Needs Assessment: Reduce Mental Health Stigma

Rogers Behavioral Health has long recognized the need for better understanding of mental health and reduction of the stigma, which was supported by findings of its 2013 community health needs assessment. As part of Rogers' response to that assessment, Rogers Behavioral Health System implemented Rogers InHealth, our advocacy arm with a specific goal to reduce stigma through storytelling and partnership.

Such partnering is well represented by Rogers' work with WISE, the Wisconsin Initiative for Stigma Elimination. WISE is a statewide coalition of organizations and individuals promoting inclusion and support for all affected by mental illness by advancing evidence-based practices for stigma reduction.

We know that people with mental health challenges sharing their recovery story in a targeted, local, credible and continuous way is the current, primary, evidence-based practice to reducing stigma. This drives the focus of WISE. Rogers provides 100 percent of the funding for Rogers InHealth staff to provide facilitative leadership to the WISE coalition. InHealth staff and an Executive Committee, which includes the leaders of statewide mental health education and advocacy organizations, provides leadership to the membership of 40-plus organizations and community partnerships. Through training and consultation, WISE increases the capacity of multiple efforts throughout Wisconsin.

One example of the powerful impact of WISE is the two-year partnership with the city of Nekoosa in Wood County. After a teen suicide and other mental health challenges, the Wood County Health Department reached out to WISE. WISE staff consulted with the public health staff and began offering guidance to the Nekoosa Mental Health Coalition. The staff led a World Café for community members and teens on the impact of stigma and what works to reduce it in schools, workplaces, and communities. When teens decided to form a peer mentorship program, WISE staff offered training to the teens and their adult leaders. The work extended beyond the schools to workplaces and health care. WISE either led trainings, connected Wood County leaders to resources, or trained trainers within the county to increase sustainability of their efforts.

Rogers InHealth was able to further support this effort through its ongoing work to film stories of recovery for sharing and use in stigma reduction work at the local level. InHealth staff has filmed four adults from Wood County and four teens. These individuals participate in editing their film footage to shape their stories into compelling testaments to the hope of recovery. These social media-sized videos will be used throughout Wood County to increase hope, support and solidarity with people facing mental health challenges.

Rogers Memorial Hospital, Oconomowoc

## Community Benefit from HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

Suicide stirs a vast range of emotions: grief, sorrow, shock, confusion, guilt and anger. Most of us know someone whose life has been turned upside down by a loved one who took their own life—sometimes it hits very close to home.

Between 2010 and 2014, nearly 130 suicides were reported in Eau Claire and Chippewa counties, according to 3D Community Health: Body. Mind. Spirit., the community health and wellness arm of HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire, and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls. It is a number that has been rising in recent years in the Chippewa Valley, which is why Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's began to raise awareness about suicide and its increasing incidence and what, as individuals and communities, we can do to lower the numbers. Throughout the past year, several community education programs focused on suicide prevention and QPR (question, persuade and refer) training are underway to help adults and teens identify the signs of suicide, how they can reach out to a person contemplating suicide and how they can persuade a person to seek help by increasing awareness of resources available for help.

During the summer of 2015, a visually compelling display was created to draw attention to the growing incidence of suicide in the Eau Claire area. More than 125 pairs of shoes were donated by the public and made into a display to represent the lives lost to suicide in Eau Claire and Chippewa counties since 2010. Although not actually shoes of suicide victims, they are symbolic of the lives no longer here, people no longer walking with us. The display has been seen in Eau Claire and nearby Chippewa Falls with reactions ranging from spiritually moving to thought provoking and hard hitting. Residents are now talking about suicide and the mental health issues that lead someone to take their own life. The first step to prevention is reducing the stigma of mental illness, and the shoe display is one example of what these hospitals are doing and what communities throughout Wisconsin can do.

This Fall, Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's hospitals will host a community event in Eau Claire featuring actress and author Mariel Hemingway, who will discuss how to survive mental illness, suicide and alcoholism in your family.



Photo submitted by HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital

HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire



## Easing Access: Bellin Brings Mental Health Services to School

When mental health was identified as a top Brown County wellness priority for 2014, Bellin Health knew it had an important role to play. After all, Bellin Psychiatric Center is a regional leader, offering top-quality inpatient and outpatient treatment services for children, adolescents and adults. Its team-centered approach means patients receive an individualized, multidisciplinary treatment plan that's right for them.

And yet Bellin officials know that a plan can only work when implemented, while recognizing that scheduling can be a challenge for busy families. So they've partnered with the Green Bay Area Public School District to make those critical services more accessible.

In February 2015, the Bellin Behavioral Health Clinic at the Dr. Rose Minoka-Hill School opened its doors. Several times a month, a child psychiatrist and licensed therapist provide behavioral and mental health services for students, who have a wide range of issues that inhibit their ability to be successful at a traditional school. The school is structured to address the root causes of those issues, with the goal of enabling students to eventually successfully transition back to a regular school setting.

"This is an opportunity to better assist students and families by providing a more easily accessible service," said Sharla Baenen, president of Bellin Psychiatric Center. "It's rewarding to work with a long-time partner, the Green Bay School District, to understand its needs and create a program to better meet those needs."

Mental health was one of four health priorities identified by the 2014 Brown County Community Health Assessment. The report noted that in 2014, Brown County residents reported an average of 3.2 poor mental health days per month. Counties with more mentally unhealthy days are more likely to have increased unemployment, poverty and disability, the report said.

Bellin Health's Minoka-Hill clinic is designed to remove barriers that students and families experience in accessing behavioral and mental health services.

Bellin Health System, Green Bay

## Price County AODA/Mental Health Coalition Creates Resource Guides

Price County Community Needs Assessment Plan was to develop two different resource guides—one for health care providers and one for the community. When the coalition got together, one of the first things they noticed was that nobody knew the depth of health care providers and professionals that worked with AODA/mental health in Price County. The coalition developed and distributed over 75 guides to health care providers for a quick and easy access tool. The coalition also developed a guide for the community of available resources in the community that work with AODA/mental health issues including crisis lines and crisis text numbers since many young adults use this form of communication. Over 500 guides are to be distributed over the next few months. Both of these guides, including development, coalition involvement, and the cost of publication, were sponsored by Flambeau Hospital.

Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

## Bringing Alcohol and Drug Abuse Awareness to Employers

Many Shawano and Menominee county employers are shocked and stunned by the variety of drugs in the counties and how they impact the workplace.

"Some of the stories have been amazing when we have been at the table," said Kathleen Franklin, facilitator with the Wolf River Region Coalition for an Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace, which has been holding employer-focused workshops in 2015 to address the alcohol and drug abuse issue, build relationships, and explore methods to address the problems faced in business.

The workshops were created following a 2012 study by the Shawano and Menominee counties Community Health Action Team, or CHAT, which identified alcohol and drug abuse as a No. 1 priority. A group of employers was interested in addressing the issues of alcohol and drug use in the workplace. ThedaCare Medical Center-Shawano and ThedaCare employees lead the local CHAT initiative.

"Maintaining a healthy workforce is vital to economic success" said Dennis Heling, chief economic development officer for Shawano County Economic Progress, Inc. "Alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace impact safety, quality, and productivity and thus impact the economic success of area businesses."

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute released a study in 2013 (Black and Paltzer) that concluded excessive alcohol use is estimated to cost \$46.7 million per year in Shawano County, including \$33.7 million in lost productivity. The cost of excessive alcohol use in Menominee County is \$6.5 million per year, with \$4.7 million in lost productivity.

Two workshops have been completed with an average of 40 participants per workshop, representing over 20 businesses in Shawano and Menominee Counties. Two more workshops are planned by 2016. Franklin said one goal is to help employers create practices that will be fairly consistent across area businesses, which rely on the local workforce. Another goal is to identify the role employers have in supporting other community initiatives designed to reduce alcohol consumption and drug use.

Large companies may have human resource departments and practices and policies in place, but small businesses might not and may rely on family and friends as employees. "How do you address these issues when they are families and friends?," asked Franklin.

The group hopes to share resources to help employers and employees identify and address alcohol and drug abuse issues. "Drugs are rapidly changing," said Franklin. "What you see today is not what you will see a week from now. How can a community keep the awareness up?"

ThedaCare Medical Center-Shawano

## Solid Analysis and Shared Investments Help Improve Access to Behavioral Health Care in Milwaukee

In 2012 and 2013, Milwaukee's five health systems planned and implemented a shared Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as part of their collaborative work through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (Partnership). In Milwaukee County, access to behavioral health care services ranked as one of the top five health priorities that emerged from a phone survey of 1,970 adults and in-depth interviews with a diverse array of 40 community leaders. This collaborative CHNA has served as the foundation from which Milwaukee's 13 hospitals and local health departments have developed their respective community health improvement strategies.

To help improve access to behavioral health services, Milwaukee's four adult health systems worked closely with the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD), the Public Policy Forum and other experts to conduct comprehensive inpatient and outpatient behavioral health capacity analyses over the last several years. Both studies have helped providers and policymakers identify gaps in behavioral health services, and are helping to shape the transition from costly, acute, episodic inpatient mental health care to a comprehensive, community-based preventive system of behavioral health services for low-income and high acuity individuals.

"Ensuring adequate inpatient and crisis services, continued expansion of community-based resources, improving care coordination across the system and increasing the behavioral health workforce are essential to moving this transition forward," notes Joy Tapper, Partnership executive director.

Through their annual contributions to the Partnership's \$1.9 million Health Systems Shared Community Investments funding pool, Aurora Health Care, Children's Hospital and Health System, Columbia St. Mary's, Froedtert Health, and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare directed \$500,000 in 2015 to help expand integrated behavioral health services at three federally-qualified health centers (FQHCs): Outreach Community Health Centers, Progressive Community Health Centers, and Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers.

"Community Health Centers play a critical role in providing integrated primary and behavioral health care for low-income families," adds Jenni Sevenich, Progressive's CEO and chair of Milwaukee's FQHC Coalition. "Support from the health systems is strengthening our ability to recruit psychiatrists and expand our facilities. Their funding is more than a shared investment—it reflects a shared commitment to community-based behavioral health care."

Milwaukee Health Care Partnership

## Aurora's Better Together Fund Awards \$6.6 Million in Grants to Improve Access to Care

Based on key informant findings, access to health care services emerged as one of the top five health issues for each Aurora Health Care hospital during its most recent Community Health Needs Assessment. The surfacing of this significant health need and Aurora's belief in the power of partnership led to the creation of the Better Together Fund, a supplemental, one-time contribution of \$10 million to expand and enhance a number of community health and wellness programs in eastern Wisconsin. In April, 2015, Aurora announced that \$6.6 million in grants from the Better Together Fund will expand primary care and behavioral health services offered by 21 community organizations—six federally qualified health centers and 15 free clinics—throughout eastern Wisconsin.

"Aurora is proud to be able to make this investment in the health and wellness of the people and communities we have the privilege of serving," said Nick Turkal, MD, CEO of Aurora Health Care. "As a nonprofit organization and a leader in health care in our state, we believe in reinvesting to create better access points to health care for all and addressing these issues of greatest need."

Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee

## Improving Access to Care

Access to Care is among the highest-priority community health needs identified in Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics' Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). In an effort to address this need, Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics is working hard to extend the reach of its health care services while also making these services easier and more convenient to use.

Significant steps taken in 2015 to improve access to care include the opening of a FastCare clinic in Abbotsford, Wisconsin, and the enhancement of our interpretation services.

Aspirus FastCare provides walk-in care for minor illnesses. It opened January 26, 2015, and is open days, evenings, weekends and holidays. Everyone is welcome to use the clinic, including people who are not Aspirus patients. A visit costs just \$54. The clinic is located in the northeast corner of Clark County, an area identified in our CHNA as lacking in health care services. The Aspirus FastCare clinic offers people living in or near this area a local option for convenient, affordable basic health care services. This is especially important given that our CHNA found area residents to have economic, transportation and time-related barriers to accessing care.

Also in January 2015, Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics began providing video remote interpreting for people with limited English proficiency and people who are deaf or hard of hearing. In our CHNA, we found that our interpretation services did not meet the needs of area residents. Demand for our in-person interpreters often exceeded our supply, and patients disliked the available telephone-based interpretation services. With our new video interpretation services, patients communicate in their spoken language with a live, medically certified interpreter in high definition video and audio using an Apple iPad and the Acutrans On-Demand Interpreting app. Interpretation is available 24/7 in over 200 languages, including American Sign Language. In making these enhancements, Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics substantially improved access to care at our hospital, satellite clinics, and FastCare clinic for patients requiring interpretation services.

Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics

## Wheaton Franciscan connects Emergency Department patients to primary care

The community needs assessment for Wheaton Franciscan – St. Joseph Campus identified an opportunity to improve access to health care for those who are uninsured and underinsured. Many underserved patients use emergency departments for their primary care, which can lead to delays in getting appropriate care, hospitalizations that could be avoided, and lack of knowledge about preventive care.

To address access barriers, hospital leaders set a goal to ensure appropriate follow up care for underserved emergency department patients. As one step to reaching this goal, St. Joseph started the Transitions of Care program to connect patients with primary care physicians.

The Transitions of Care team is stationed in the St. Joseph emergency department, coordinating with physician offices and community resources. Two health care coordinators assist with less complex cases and link patients to community resources and a primary care physician if they do not have a doctor. RNs or a social worker help patients understand and navigate their complex, chronic conditions.

The team assesses total patient wellness for dental, OB/GYN, or other needs, and provides ongoing case management for high-risk patients. Patients are scheduled with a primary care physician to establish a medical home, and uninsured individuals receive guidance in enrolling in government insurance. The team also makes follow-up calls to check in with the patient and offer assistance with transportation, translation, or other potential barriers to keeping that first scheduled clinic appointment.

Program goals include helping individuals develop a relationship with a primary care provider, prevent non-urgent emergency department visits by providing patients with education and resources, and to improve an individual's health literacy to promote better disease management.

A year and a half into the program, the team sees an average of more than 300 patients a month and makes about 200 appointments with physicians from Wheaton Franciscan Medical Group, Wheaton's Family Care Center, federally qualified health centers, or other community doctors.

Results show the program is working:

- Increased show rates to first primary care appointments
- Decreased 30-day hospital admissions
- Ongoing, disease-specific case management
- Overall improved health

Connecting patients with a primary care physician helps promote better health and quality of life for our patients. It's also the right thing to do to reach our goal of managing population health.

Wheaton Franciscan – St. Joseph Campus, Milwaukee

## Access to Specialty Care for the Uninsured – A Coordinated Approach

In 2012 and 2013, Milwaukee's five health systems planned and implemented a shared Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as part of their collaborative work through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (Partnership). In Milwaukee County, access to health care services ranked as one of the top five health priorities that emerged from a phone survey of 1,970 adults and in-depth interviews with a diverse array of 40 community leaders. This collaborative CHNA has served as the foundation from which Milwaukee's 13 hospitals and local health departments have developed their respective community health improvement strategies.

With 8-11 percent of County residents uninsured at any point in time, Milwaukee's health systems have sponsored free clinics and worked closely with federally-qualified health centers and other community clinics to weave a stronger safety net of care for low-income and vulnerable individuals. Of particular focus has been inadequate access to specialty care for uninsured adults—an especially complex issue. A Partnership survey in 2009 of primary care providers (PCPs) in Milwaukee revealed that access to specialty care for the uninsured was their top concern, with most PCPs referring their patients to the emergency department, or relying on personal relationships with specialists to secure free consults, tests and services. Through the Partnership, Milwaukee's adult health systems—Aurora Health Care, Columbia St. Mary's, Froedtert Health and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare—came together establish the Specialty Access for Uninsured Program (SAUP).

The SAUP offers timely, managed, and clinically appropriate specialty diagnostics and treatment for over 20,000 uninsured individuals who are established in a primary care medical home at one of Milwaukee's nine area safety net clinics. Each participating safety net clinic is matched with one or more hospital / health system to coordinate access to specialty care services. The clinics provide primary care, medication access, benefit counseling, enrollment assistance and navigation support. The hospital / health systems each secure a network of specialists and provide inpatient and outpatient specialty services. Since 2012, the four health systems have provided nearly 4,000 episodes of uninsured specialty care for uninsured adults.

"The health systems' physician leaders, administrators, financial counselors and care managers have been extraordinary advocates, along with their safety net clinic colleagues, in establishing a coordinated approach for this complex challenge," notes Joy Tapper, Partnership executive director. "Their collaboration is helping replace a fragmented system of care with a model that is both cost effective and patient centered."

Milwaukee Health Care Partnership

## Health Care Support Services

To Reedsburg Area Medical Center & Marianne:

I was truly at wits end trying to figure out how I was going to obtain medical insurance for myself. It seems that I fall into one of those holes in the coverage and my logon on the Health Insurance Marketplace wasn't working either. After wasting three whole days trying to figure things out (much of it on the phone with folks at BadgerCare and the Health Insurance Marketplace), I was about ready to give up—just go without insurance and pay the fine next year because it simply wasn't worth my time to keep struggling with a system that is so terribly broken. That's when Pegg at the Specialty Center mentioned that I should talk with Denise Sobczak to help get things straightened out.

I called Denise for some help in figuring my situation out. Even after trying her suggestions, I just couldn't get the online system to work right. So, I made an appointment with her in a last ditch effort because I really did want the insurance.

Even after making an appointment, I was still pretty much uncertain that anyone would be able to help me out. Denise greeted me with a broad smile on her face, which put me instantly at ease. She looked at all my paperwork and she got right to work on my account online. I never felt ill at ease with her. In fact, we had a nice conversation between questions while she worked online. It turns out my account was broken (much as I'd suspected).

Denise got on the phone, called the right people, asked the right questions, and got the right answers. She actually had to direct the steps of the person at the other end of the phone (they seemed a bit clueless), which I thought was absolutely amazing! After just a few minutes, my account was fixed up and we were ready to reenter it. Again, I never would have figured out how to enter the proper information, but she went to just the right spot. More importantly, she helped me pick out the right plan for me and now I'm ready with the kind of insurance that meets my specific needs. She knew all kinds of things about the plans that I just wouldn't have figured out on my own.

I now have insurance that I really can afford and information on just what to do next year when it's time to reapply. When I left her office, I was really happy. It's easy to tell when someone likes their job and Denise obviously loves hers. When someone does such a good job it's a good thing to say something about it, which is why I'm writing this letter to you on Denise's behalf. She really saved me a lot of pain in getting insurance on our broken medical insurance system and I don't know what I would have done without her—best of all, she did it all with a smile.

Sincerely, John Paul Mueller, LaValle, WI

Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg

## From Preventive to Urgent – Improving Access to Oral Health Services

In 2012 and 2013, Milwaukee's five health systems planned and implemented a shared Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as part of their collaborative work through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (Partnership). In Milwaukee County, access to oral health services ranked as one of the top five health priorities that emerged from a phone survey of 1,970 adults and in-depth interviews with a diverse array of 40 community leaders. This collaborative CHNA has served as the foundation from which Milwaukee's 13 hospitals and local health departments have developed their respective community health improvement strategies.

Through their financial support to, and participation in the Milwaukee County Oral Health Task Force, Milwaukee's health systems are contributing to a community-wide collaboration to improve access to oral health care for low-income, uninsured and Medicaid enrollees, as well as promoting oral health awareness, prevention and education. The Task Force is convened by the Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin and receives shared funding from Aurora Health Care, Columbia St. Mary's, Froedtert Health, and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare via the Partnership, as well as in-kind support from Children's Hospital and Health System.

Bill Solberg, director of community services at Columbia St. Mary's and task force chairman is optimistic about the Task Force's ability to build on its members' existing strengths and best practice models.

"The adult health systems in Milwaukee have demonstrated significant success through the Partnership's Emergency Department Care Coordination initiative, which connects Medicaid and uninsured emergency department patients to primary care and dental care. This coordinated effort among hospitals, community health centers and community clinics is helping strengthen the dental safety net for low-income individuals—many of whom seek emergency department care only after their dental need is acute."

Joy Tapper, Partnership executive director, shares Solberg's outlook. "Milwaukee's health systems see their support to the Oral Health Task Force having a meaningful impact on community health. From expanding the number of high risk schools and students served by the Wisconsin Seal-A-Smile program, to a growing focus on assuring prenatal oral health for low-income expectant mothers, we are making head-way in improving access to oral health care."

Milwaukee Health Care Partnership

## Children's Hospital of WI Pioneers Community Health Navigator Program to Link Families, Resources



Photo submitted by Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

Too often, the health of Milwaukee kids is determined by the neighborhood where they grew up. With a vision that Wisconsin's kids will be the healthiest in the nation, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin is working to improve health outcomes in three Milwaukee neighborhoods that have the greatest health disparities despite the presence of community assets and resources: Amani/Franklin Heights, Metcalfe Park and Lindsay Heights.

"After connecting, listening and engaging with families in our partner neighborhoods areas, we realized that when basic food, shelter and transportation needs are not being met, health care is a much lower priority for families," said Gabe Doyle, community health navigation supervisor at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

With this in mind, an innovative approach was launched: a community health navigator program that would build relationships with families and link them to established resources to overcome barriers to allow them the opportunity to improve their health.

Today, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin's three community health navigators walk through the neighborhoods they serve with a resource binder, knocking on doors, checking in on residents and gauging what's holding them back from, say, making healthy meals for their kids or getting a mammogram. Their purpose is to serve as connectors and help empower residents. The community health navigators also partner with school nurses, social care workers, foster care workers and primary care providers to ensure cohesive and successful care delivery.

During summer 2015, community health navigator Bregetta Wilson was contacted by a school nurse at Clarke Street School about a girl who was at risk for developing diabetes. Wilson contacted the girl's mother, LaKeesha to discuss the nurse's concerns. During that conversation, LaKeesha shared that she also needed to get her daughter dental care but was unsure about how to do that.

"I helped connect LaKeesha to community resources, such as a free dental clinic, swim lessons and the Metcalfe Park Health Fair," says Wilson. "I worked with LaKeesha to set goals about eating habits and summer activities for her kids and stayed in regular contact with her to check in on progress." Today, LaKeesha reports that she is happy with the healthy habits her family is starting to develop.

Community health navigators often get involved with families because of reasons that most people believe are completely unrelated to health. However, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin believes being healthy doesn't just mean kids are not sick – it means they have the medical, emotional and social support systems and resources necessary to reach their full potential. For example, Community Health Navigator, Robert Walker, worked with a family referred to him by a school nurse in spring 2015 because a young girl, Essence, had told the school nurse she had no lights or food at home. "I reached out to the girl's mom, Tiffany, and learned she had recently lost her job, was past due on rent and owed the electric company more than \$3,000," says Walker.

Walker connected her with a food pantry, shared budgeting tips and helped Tiffany contact the electric company to set up a payment plan. Within a few months, Tiffany had a new job, had paid back much of her electric bill and was able to provide her family with food due to the budget tips she had learned.

These are just a few of the ways Children's Hospital of Wisconsin's community health navigators have impacted more than 3,200 Milwaukee residents in underserved communities since the program started a little over three years ago, says Doyle. "Our goal is to provide the best possible care for Milwaukee kids and their families – no matter which ZIP code they grow up in."

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

## CHNA – Rural Geographic Disparity – need for transportation

### Working with local agencies to protect workers and volunteers

Transportation is often a problem that keeps non-drivers from seeking health care. When a community transportation agency was facing challenges, Upland Hills Health employees offered help and expertise.

The local transportation agency offers a valuable service that allows community members better access to health care. Because volunteer drivers are often transporting patients to and from medical appointments, the agency director recognized that precautions needed to be taken to keep volunteer drivers safe. The transportation agency partnered with Upland Hills Health to provide cleaning supply kits to be carried in transport vehicles. Hospital staff designed a program to train drivers to properly use the kits and personal protective equipment when there is a potential for exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material. The goal is to keep drivers safe, reduce their concerns through education and maintain the viability of a much needed transportation service.

Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

## Enrollment Resources for Patients and the Community

In 2012 and 2013, Milwaukee's five health systems planned and implemented a shared Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as part of their collaborative work through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (Partnership). In Milwaukee County, adequate and affordable health insurance coverage ranked as was one of the top five health priorities that emerged from a phone survey of 1,970 adults and in-depth interviews with a diverse array of 40 community leaders. This collaborative CHNA has served as the foundation from which Milwaukee's 13 hospitals and local health departments have developed their respective community health improvement strategies.

Through the Partnership, Milwaukee's five health systems helped form the Milwaukee Enrollment Network (MKEN) in collaboration with Covering Kids & Families and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Launched in 2013, just prior to the first ACA open enrollment, MKEN's purpose is to reach out and enroll Milwaukee County residents in public benefits and private insurance via the Health Insurance Marketplace, with a focus on underserved populations. The MKEN membership has grown to over 500 participants representing 100 organizations working together to facilitate enrollment and renewal for over 125,000 low-income and vulnerable Milwaukee County residents.

Elizabeth Cliffe Kucharski, director, government relations and advocacy at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, chairs the MKEN health systems workgroup. "Milwaukee's health systems recognize that collectively, we have the opportunity to build on our patient relationships throughout Milwaukee County by reaching out to the most vulnerable and supporting them in getting health insurance. Since 2013, we've taken a collaborative approach to share best practices, offer our Certified Application Counselors to staff community enrollment events and media drives, and partner with MKEN member organizations."

"The Milwaukee health systems have had a strong commitment to securing health care coverage for all those who are eligible for many years," says Joy Tapper, Partnership executive director. "Thanks to the support from Aurora Health Care, Children's Hospital and Health System, Columbia St. Mary's, Froedtert Health, and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, via the Partnership, we have been able to fund an enrollment project manager who coordinates the Milwaukee Enrollment Network, and who also oversees the update of an annual enrollment directory of over 35 organizations that provide health insurance and public benefits enrollment services. The directory is a valuable tool to IMPACT 2-1-1, human service agencies, community health workers and other stakeholders who help Milwaukee County residents secure public health benefits and Marketplace coverage."

Milwaukee Health Care Partnership

## New Mayo Clinic Health System Grant Program Awards more than \$182,000 to Nonprofits in NW WI



The Boys & Girls Club received a \$25,000 Hometown Health grant from Mayo Clinic Health System for prevention education that will address drug and alcohol use, premature sexual activity and peer pressure, as well as practicing resilience and refusal skills.

Do you remember that old TEAM acronym, standing for Together Everyone Achieves More?

It's a good fit for the premise of the Hometown Health Grant Program started in 2015 by Mayo Clinic Health System – Eau Claire Foundation.

"When we initiated this concept, our premise was that health is more than just the absence of illness; health is a balance of people's physical, emotional and social well-being," says Randall Linton, M.D., president and CEO of Mayo Clinic Health System in northwest Wisconsin.

By investing more than \$182,000 in grant money awarded to nine nonprofits in northwest Wisconsin, Mayo Clinic Health System is working to improve the health of communities in the region. The grant recipients focused on improving nutrition, increasing physical activity and reducing chronic diseases, such as

obesity and diabetes.

The program opened to applicants in January 2015. New or existing programs in Barron, Buffalo, Dunn, Chippewa, Eau Claire, Pierce, St. Croix and Trempealeau counties were invited to apply.

Mayo Clinic Health System plans to offer grants yearly. The grant application process will open again in January 2016.

"By investing in our community partners, we can make a bigger impact in improving the health of all of us who live in northwest Wisconsin," Dr. Linton says.

Mayo Clinic Health System, Eau Claire

## Merrill Community Agencies Find New Home on Ministry Good Samaritan Campus

Six community assistance agencies in Merrill have a new home thanks to the support of Ministry Health Care.

In February, offices and programs of Comunidad Hispania, Merrill Community Food Pantry, Merrill Area United Way, North Central Community Action Program, St. Vincent de Paul Outreach and Merrill Salvation Army relocated from an outdated and failing Community Care Center on Main Street to the Menard Center on the Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center Campus.

Ministry Good Samaritan leaders contacted the agencies about the need for new space as they were seeking funding for much needed repairs to the current location, which they called home since 2007. With a fundraising campaign at only about 25 percent of its goal, the organizations were eager to hear about a proposed plan that would eliminate the need for the repairs and also bring new opportunities to expand their footprint and services.

Under terms of the agreement, each agency was given space in the Menard Resource Center with Ministry Good Samaritan also covering costs of utilities and maintenance as part of its regular operation of the hospital campus. The Menard Center is also home to Ministry Good Samaritan's Rehabilitation Services and Dialysis Unit.

"We were excited to bring these vital community organizations to our facility and hope our support will allow them to continue and expand their services to people in need in the Merrill area," said Mary Krueger, president of Ministry Good Samaritan. "Each of these agencies aligns directly with our mission to improve the health and well-being of all people, especially the poor."

Dennis McCarthy of Merrill is involved with many of the agencies involved. He serves on the Ministry Good Samaritan Board of Directors as well as leadership groups for the Food Pantry, Comunidad Hispania and St. Vincent de Paul.

"This is really a godsend for all of the organizations involved and we are grateful for the support of Ministry Health Care," said McCarthy. "By removing the burden of operating an aging building, we will be able to better focus our efforts and resources to helping those in need in our community."

McCarthy estimates that the organizations will save nearly \$30,000 in savings each year as the result of the move to the Menard Center which he adds will provide improved and increased space and accessibility for those who utilize the services.

A second phase is already in the works to bring Bridge Community Dental Clinic into the Menard Center to join these community agencies.

Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill



Tricia Draeger, RN, Manager of Patient Care Services, Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center, and Jamie Turner, RN, Supervisor of Patient Care Services, Ministry Good Samaritan Health Center, Stock Shelves at Merrill Community Food Pantry.

## OK2Ask: A Community Campaign Designed to Promote Health Literacy

Each day, people face choices about their health. Receiving and understanding health information are vital steps in making good health choices. Still, research shows that nearly 9 out of 10 adults have trouble understanding basic health information.

"Health literacy is not just the ability to read the health information, it's the ability to understand our medical care and make an informed decision," said Mary Paluchniak, RN, BSN, Outreach Facilitator, HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital and co-chair of the Healthy Sheboygan County 2020 Health Literacy group. "Many of us will struggle with health literacy at some point in our lives, no matter our age, gender or ethnicity."

Health Literacy was first identified as a priority in 2011 as a result of two separate but complimentary Community Health Needs Assessments completed by the local health department and HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital. As a result of this identified need, Healthy Sheboygan County 2020 established a Health Literacy Committee composed of members from community organizations, including HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital colleagues, dedicated to improving health literacy in Sheboygan County.

With the aim of building a healthier Sheboygan County, the OK2ASK Health Literacy Community Campaign was started to encourage people to talk to their health care providers by reminding them that it is always "Ok to ask."

The OK2ASK campaign encourages people to start by asking their health care provider and pharmacist two simple questions:

1. Why is it important to me?
2. What should I do next?

The campaign reminds people that it is important to build strong partnerships with their health care team. The campaign also gives tips on keeping track of health information to make it simpler to manage their health care.

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital provided funding to assist the media campaign. These efforts include printing brochures and posters, and bus advertising to share the message it is OK2Ask.

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

## Care Coordination across the Community – A Link to Primary Care Medical Homes

In 2012 and 2013, Milwaukee's five health systems planned and implemented a shared Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as part of their collaborative work through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (Partnership). In Milwaukee County, improved coordination of care across health care delivery systems ranked as one of the top five health priorities that emerged from a phone survey of 1,970 adults and in-depth interviews with a diverse array of 40 community leaders. This collaborative CHNA has served as the foundation from which Milwaukee's 13 hospitals and local health departments have developed their respective community health improvement strategies.

Through the Partnership's Emergency Department Care Coordination (EDCC) initiative, Milwaukee's adult health systems jointly work to connect uninsured and Medicaid emergency department (ED) patients with primary care health homes and other health resources. This large effort involves physicians, case managers, clinic social workers, and administrators in eight adult hospital EDs and more than ten community clinics. Aided by an online appointment scheduling tool My Health Direct, hospital ED staff schedule an appointment at a community clinic for the patient, during the ED visit. Clinicians and care managers are also aided by the ability to see the patient's community health record through the Wisconsin Statewide Health Information Network (WISHIN.) There have been over 43,000 appointments scheduled since 2009, demonstrating a 44 percent reduction in subsequent ED visits for participating patients.

Dr. Chris Decker, EDCC co-chair and professor of emergency medicine and chief transformation officer at the Medical College Physicians, notes, "At the emergency department level in Milwaukee, the collaboration has been excellent. Care coordination in a meaningful, patient-centered way is one of the critical frontiers in medicine today. Many of the elements are in place to explore, assess and optimize tactics to increase successful transitions of underserved patients from emergency departments to a medical home."

Additionally, Aurora Health Care, Children's Hospital and Health System, Columbia St. Mary's, Froedtert Health, and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare provide significant funding to support intake coordinators at federally-qualified health centers through their annual contributions to the Partnership's \$1.9 million Health Systems Shared Community Investments funding pool. The care coordinators are instrumental in reaching out to engage pregnant women, patients with chronic health conditions, and frequent ED visitors, and to keep them connected with a primary care provider.

Milwaukee Health Care Partnership

## Ministry Saint Clare's Helps Expand DC Everest Rolling Readers Program

During the summer of 2015, The D.C. Everest Area School District (DCE) enhanced several initiatives to encourage students to read during the summer months in order to retain their reading proficiency, comprehension and vocabulary skills.

One of those initiatives was the Rolling Readers Program. Throughout the summer, the Rolling Readers van visited five locations within the DCE District to provide students with reading materials they can borrow during the summer.

DCE partnered with Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital in Weston and Blessings in a Backpack to expand the program—providing students with a free book and seven days of nutritious, easy-to-prepare meals and snacks throughout the summer.

Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital funded a grant to provide each child with approximately 10 free books they can keep and a bag of food each week. Blessings in a Backpack and its community volunteers facilitated the purchase and packing of the food bags. Each bag consists of seven breakfasts, seven lunches and seven snacks.

"The Rolling Readers program has doubled since last summer," said Mary Jo Lechner, DCE Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Learning. "Each week we have about 80 students visit the Rolling Readers van to choose fresh reading materials and take home a bag full of food. We are grateful to both Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital and Blessings in a Backpack for their generosity. The kids are so excited to pick out new books each week and to enjoy a healthy snack while reading—we've had an overwhelming response from the students and their parents."

"Education is an essential component to ensuring that children attain their highest potential. Reading books helps to develop children's imaginations as well as fostering their desire to learn. The added component of providing food guarantees children's minds and bodies are being provided for during the summer break," said Antonina Olszewski of Ministry Saint Clare's.

"Blessings in a Backpack is committed to providing food to our community children while they are not in school. These children depend on breakfast and lunch programs during the school year. We are trying to bridge the gap for these children both over the weekends during the school year and during the summer by working with the Rolling Readers and summer school programs," said Margaret P'ng of Blessings in a Backpack D.C. Everest-Wausau.

Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital, Weston



Photo submitted by Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital



## Impacting Manitowoc County's Population Health...One Book at a Time!

Research shows that social and economic factors impact a person's overall health outcomes by 40 percent. Learning early foundational languages skills help start children on a path of educational success and, eventually, financial prosperity.

Holy Family Memorial (HFM) Pediatrics, Manitowoc County's only dedicated pediatric clinic, is proud to partner with the Lester Public Library and the Manitowoc-Calumet Library System to create the first ever Reach Out and Read Program of Manitowoc County.

Beginning a child's six-month well-baby check and continuing on to their five year old well-child check, our pediatricians will write a prescription for parents assigning them to read to their child. With the prescription comes a free book to get parents started. All of the providers/physicians at HFM Pediatrics are trained in the Reach Out and Read Program and are actively prescribing reading to families for their children.

Reading aloud and talking together every day helps create secure relationships and a strong foundation for learning. Books can become an important part of every family's naptime, playtime and bedtime routines.

Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based nonprofit organization of medical providers who promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud to their youngsters.

Holy Family Memorial, Manitowoc

## School District Works with Mentors

The School District of New London is working with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Fox Valley Region to match mentors with children. "It is a benefit to the children of our community to have access to additional trusted adults in their life," said Laurie Schmidt, director of pupil services, School District of New London

In October 2014, the Community Health Action Teams, or CHAT, of Waupaca and New London took a plunge into mental health. Both communities chose to focus on mentoring. New London sought to provide community mentoring. "The team determined that a community-based mentoring program was the best route to go as there was not a specific site that could be easily accessible for a site based program," said Schmidt. ThedaCare Medical Center-New London and ThedaCare lead the local CHAT initiative.

The communities chose to work with Big Brothers Big Sisters since it already had a system of recruitment, certification and training. With CHAT funding, a professional advertising campaign was developed and included social media, community presentations and advertising.

"The mentoring program was set up as a drive to engage community members to sign up with Big Brothers Big Sisters," said Schmidt. "Our goal was to have 30 matches, 20 additional to the current 10, in our community."

The school district shared pamphlets from Big Brothers Big Sisters with parents looking for mentoring opportunities for their child. Also, the district Bulldogs of Character in the Community program promoted the drive for mentors.

Currently, there are 12 active mentor partnerships, said Schmidt, who said recruiting will continue. "We definitely have a lot of mentees, a lot of littles, looking for mentors," she said.

ThedaCare Medical Center-New London

## Waupaca Providing Mentors for Children

The City of Waupaca is reaching out in the community to provide mentors to children.

The Park and Rec department is partnering with the Waupaca Community Health Action Team, or CHAT, and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Fox Valley Region. Members of ThedaCare Medical Center-Waupaca lead CHAT.

"There are a lot of users of the rec center and youth within the community that we felt were good candidates for a program like that," said Aaron Jenson, park and rec director. "That was why we felt that Big Brothers Big Sisters was the way to go because they are a proven organization."

In October 2014, the Waupaca and New London CHAT's took a plunge or deep-dive into mental health. Waupaca chose to focus on on-site mentoring with the use of its rec center. To date 16 mentors will start working with the kids in October.

However, Jenson said candidates wanted to take the program into the community. This means mentors can pick up their littles and take them to a park or restaurant or other outing to spend time with them. "The rec center will still be used as a facility for the mentors and those who come to the rec center," said Jenson.

The park and rec department has offered after school programs at its rec center but they know those don't fill in the need for mentors to come alongside children. That is why the partnership with the Boys & Girls Club is important, said Jenson. "In every community there are kids that may need this type of a relationship more than others," he said. "I think it's important to provide an opportunity for that to happen."

ThedaCare Medical Center-Waupaca

## \$3.4 Million in Grants Provided by the Aurora Health Care Better Together Fund to Support Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Programs Across Eastern Wisconsin

In July 2015, Aurora Health Care hospitals awarded a total of \$3.4 million in grants through its Better Together Fund to a combination of community organizations, colleges and universities throughout eastern Wisconsin. The funds will be used to support the development and/or expansion of community-based sexual assault and domestic violence prevention and treatment programs.

"Aurora Health Care is proud to be working hand-in-hand with these dedicated community-based providers throughout eastern Wisconsin to help stem the tide of domestic violence and sexual assault," said Nick Turkal, MD, CEO of Aurora Health Care. "Aurora has never shied away from difficult conversations and community concerns. While we've been championing efforts to put an end to domestic and sexual violence for more than 25 years, we know that there is still much work to be done and that – together—we can make a tangible difference."

Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee

## Safe Sleep

At first glance, an infant asleep in her crib connotes peacefulness and serenity, as well as a factor that girds those previous two descriptors—safety. But the safety that's necessary for nighttime serenity depends on that child's sleeping environment. And a cluttered environment can invite tragedy.

Nearly 4,000 infants die suddenly and unexpectedly in the United States each year. A majority of these deaths are from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or other sleep-related issues. SIDS is the leading cause of death for infants under one year of age.

In response, American Family Children's Hospital's Safety Center is joining a number of Dane County organizations in promoting safe sleeping practices for infants. The local campaign aims to educate parents, caregivers and health care providers on ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of death.

Nan Peterson, director of child health advocacy at American Family Children's Hospital and co-director of the Dane County Safe Sleep Initiative, is one of the campaign's catalysts.

"We are focused on helping the families in our communities modify risk factors that can lead to an infant's death," she says. "We really just want people to be aware of what a safe sleep environment looks like."

To extend that awareness, the coalition has put together safe sleep recommendations, including:

### Dos of Safe Sleep

- Lay your baby on their back to sleep
- Use a safe crib with a firm, tight-fitting mattress covered with a crib sheet and nothing else in it
- To keep your baby warm, use a sleep sack (wearable blanket)
- Use a tight-fitting, firm mattress with a fitted crib sheet

### Don'ts of Safe Sleep

- Smoke, drink alcohol or use illegal drugs during pregnancy or after the baby is born
- Put your baby to sleep on beds, sofas, recliners, chairs, soft surfaces, bouncy chairs, baby swings or car seats
- Use pillows, loose sheets or blankets, stuffed toys, crib bumpers, sleep positioners and other soft bedding products
- Put your baby to sleep in an adult bed, on a couch, or on a chair alone, with you or anyone else

American Family Children's Hospital, Madison

## Latino Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Latino teens in the Fox Cities are learning how to build their self-esteem and look to the future. "We wanted to make sure we were identifying some of the issues and challenges our Latina youth are facing," said Jean Blaney McGinnis, community health coordinator with ThedaCare, which includes Appleton Medical Center.

In 2010, a community plunge was launched by the ThedaCare-led Community Health Action Team, or CHAT, to look at the growing Hispanic community in the Fox Cities. One of the issues noted was the rise in teen pregnancies among Latino teens. "We found out that Latino teen pregnancy was double their counterparts," said Blaney McGinnis. "As a group, we decided this was an area we wanted to take a look at."

The group did research and purchased the Cuidate program, which was tailored to the area. "The program itself really focuses on not just preventing pregnancy but building self-esteem and helping our teens look beyond today," said Blaney McGinnis.

In 2014, 42 youth—37 female and 5 male—mostly Latino, completed the program. The program includes six 60-minute modules with 6 to 8 students per session. There are discussions, videos, lectures, games and music that explore the topics and culture and encourage developing positive relationships, self-confidence and decision making.

Cuidate, which means "take care of yourself" in Spanish, is starting its third year and is connected with schools in Appleton well as the Boys & Girls Club in Appleton, which also included participation by Neenah students.

Blaney McGinnis said the group wants to spread the program into Hilbert, Menasha and Neenah school districts. "We are looking at really branching out into the other communities," she said.

ThedaCare

## Health Care Providers Unite to Support Marathon County Start Right Program

Marathon County's Start Right program aims to help parents be the best parents they can be by providing prevention focused education and support services during pregnancy and with children from birth to age five.

Start Right was created in 1994 as a public-private partnership. As the result of support from the Aspirus Health Foundation, Aspirus Wausau Hospital, and Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital in Weston, it will continue to offer its Step by Step and First Steps programs to Marathon County families.

Each organization has agreed to invest in this important program to provide a combined total of \$50,000 in funding to support a Family Educator for Step by Step, a parenting home visitation service and a public health nurse to provide outreach to families with newborns with First Steps.

"We are grateful for the support of our community hospitals and their continued commitment to healthy families and educated parents in our area," said Marathon County Health Officer Joan Theurer, RN, MSN.

Start Right tracks more than 40 outcomes related to maternal and child health, home safety, quality of the home environment and school readiness. It provides health teaching, case management, parenting education, resource referral and support for families in Marathon County.

"Start Right is a unique program that offers a comprehensive set of parenting education and support services under one umbrella program," said Antonina Olszewski, foundation director and community benefit coordinator at Ministry Saint Clare's. "This program helps meet the needs of new parents in our community and closely aligns with our identified health need to support early childhood development."

Start Right has also incorporated national standards for comprehensive home visitations programs via the Parents as Teachers Curriculum and meets national Council on Accreditation Standards. Marathon County is one of 28 counties that provide home visitation parent education programs for families with young children.

"This support will continue this valuable program for families in our community," said Tara Marciniak, community health programs manager, Aspirus Wausau Hospital. "Continuing this program will ensure healthy children that are safe in their homes and experience nurturing relationships with their parents."

The First Steps program services approximately 350 women prenatally and postpartum via home visits. The Step by Step program serves nearly 250 families each year.

"Start Right contributes to ensuring that every child in Marathon County gets off to a great start, a long-term call to action for our community from the 2013-2015 LIFE in Marathon County Report," added Theurer.

Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital, Weston, and Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau

## Walking Trails to Provide Safe and Sensible Routes Around Oconto Falls

We often take sidewalks for granted, assuming they will take us just about anywhere in a small town. This is currently not the case in Oconto Falls, but the Oconto Falls Area Trail System Committee is working to change that.

"In our community, city sidewalks end or do not exist in critical areas, which doesn't allow for safe and accessible walks to school," says David Lally, business development director, HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital. "There are currently no complete routes around the city, but rather segmented areas for pedestrian and bicycle use. High-traffic roads have little or no shoulder, no sidewalk and no trail."

In an effort to change that, the Oconto Falls Area Trail System Committee, which includes HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital, came together to launch an initiative to complete a trail system in the city of Oconto Falls. The new trail system also hopes to encourage Oconto Falls residents to be more active. According to the 2010 Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 63 percent of Oconto County adults are obese or overweight. Another study, completed by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, found that 25 percent of Wisconsin high school students are overweight or obese.

When the committee set out to obtain grant money for the project, it realized it did not have matching funds, which would make getting a grant nearly impossible. As a result, HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital was among the organizations that helped to secure funding and project management resources to get the project off the ground. Future phases and maintenance dollars will be provided by the annual Run for the Trails Run/Walk and from other area businesses or individuals.

"Once completed, we hope the trails will establish connecting links to residential neighborhoods, provide safe and sensible routes to school and around the city, and increase the amount of time our residents spend being active," said Lally.

HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls

## Community Pharmaceutical Take-Back and Medical Equipment Drive

Area residents had the opportunity to safely dispose of unneeded medications and/or donate home medical equipment and supplies during an event held at HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital in May 2015. The hospital organized the Pharmaceutical Take-Back event, as an initiative of the Green Team, in conjunction with Healthy Sheboygan County 2020 and the Sheboygan Police Department. Additionally, the hospital Green Team organized a Medical Equipment Drive to take place on the same day.

“We host these events because it’s important to be a resource and educate the community on proper, safe, and eco-friendly disposal of unwanted, unneeded and expired medicines,” said Mary Paluchniak, RN, BSN, Outreach Facilitator, HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital. “The majority of participants expressed gratitude in having a designated place to take these items they no longer need. And many were excited to learn that other items can be dropped off at the hospital, including sharps, which can be disposed of 24/7.”

At HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, the Pharmaceutical Take-Back event collected and properly disposed of more than 194 pounds of prescription and over-the-counter medications. The top three types of medicines collected were prescription pills, over-the-counter pills and prescription creams.

Gently used home medical equipment such as crutches, canes, wheelchairs, braces and more were donated to help support the Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach Program.

“Of the people who participated at HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, more than half had never participated before,” added Paluchniak. “We’re happy to see that people continue to help reduce the threat of prescription drug abuse by cleaning out their medicine cabinets.”

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

## Hospital-supported initiatives: Casualty Care in the Classroom

In 2014, an FBI report showed that incidences of school and workplace violence are increasing annually. Even in the best of circumstances, EMS providers may not be in a position to immediately render aid to the wounded. Because of this, it is up to the individuals at the scene to help the victims and stop the bleeding.

Seeing a need to empower school and business staff, Dr. Christopher Wistrom, emergency medicine physician at Mercy Health System, began meeting with members of the Janesville Police Department, Janesville Fire and the School District of Janesville, to discuss how to best respond in the event of a shooting or other violent situation in local schools or businesses. They knew that even in the best of circumstances, emergency medical service (EMS) providers may not be in a position to immediately render aid to the wounded. Because of this, it is up to the individuals at the scene to help the victims and stop the bleeding.

The task force determined that the best way to support their goals was to develop a training program and packaged materials that could be taken to area schools. The kit/program includes an instructional video and the kit, which consists of two pairs of gloves, one pressure dressing, one roll of gauze, one tourniquet and instructional card.

Since the program was implemented in early 2014, over 3,000 kits have been purchased and on-site training to over 5,000 people has been completed. In addition, Mercy successfully trained and empowered the Janesville School District, Beloit Turner High School, YWCA, Winnebago County EMS, Blackhawk Technical Safety Department, Brodhead EMS and Darien EMS.

One teacher described the training as something she’ll never forget. “I pray that these kits are never used, but if I have to, I’m confident I know what to do.”

Mercy Health System, Janesville



Photo submitted by Mercy Health System

## HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital hosts 2015 Community Safety Fair

The 2015 Community Safety Fair was held on Saturday, June 6 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the HSHS. St. Clare Memorial Hospital ambulance garage. This annual event is organized and sponsored by HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital, ST Paper Company, Tyco Fire Protection Products, the City of Oconto Falls and Procter and Gamble.

“The Safety Fair brings community members of all ages together to learn about variety of safety topics,” says Kathy Henne, EMS liaison, HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital. “It’s a great opportunity for the community to meet the people who work to keep them safe, including firefighters, local police, county police and hospital personnel.”

The fair was attended by 200 community members and offered 28 safety-related topics, as well as raffle drawings for items such as fire extinguishers, CO2 detectors, first aid kits and smoke alarms.

Attendees had the opportunity to check out the Eagle III Helicopter, watch firefighters use the Jaws of Life, meet Dexter the K-9 dog, take part in a self-defense demonstration, give hands-only CPR using an AED and learn about sports safety. According to Henne, one of the big attractions for families is the bike giveaway and the free bike helmets with fitting.

Other activities included a medication drop, sun bead bracelet activity, AAA driving simulator, code red display, drug look alike exhibit and blood pressure checks.

“The overall safety message and reminders apparent throughout the event are what’s really important,” says Henne. “We want to make sure everyone in our community is safe and healthy.”

HSHS. St. Clare Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls

## Hospital-supported initiatives: Honoring end of life decisions

Health care costs in our aging population are enormous. HealthView Services suggests costs for Medicare B, D and Supplemental insurance for a healthy couple retiring this year at age 65 will be \$267,000. Many of those costs can accumulate in the final days of life. Those costs can leave a family in debt for decades. Many people don’t want to talk or think about these situations. But doing so before a crisis can ease the burden and stress of decisions that would fall on loved ones.

That’s why Mercy Health System joined the statewide initiative Honoring Choices Wisconsin to make advance care planning, including sensitive and often difficult conversations about end-of-life care, a standard part of patient care.

Honoring Choices trained Mercy staff to be certified advance care planning facilitators. Through the program, Mercy patients can meet with the facilitators to start the conversation about their future health care wishes, appoint a health care agent, clarify goals, and weigh options about the kind of care and treatment they want or do not want.

By encouraging patients to have these conversations while they are healthy, they are able to live the last chapter of their life with as much meaning and quality as possible. It also helps ease the hardship for family and friends of not knowing what they want if they are unable to speak for themselves.

In April, a second event was hosted for the public, bringing in an additional 70 guests. Together, the event workshops brought in over 100 people.

Mercy Health System, Janesville

## End of Life Initiative Formed

It is important to make talking about end of life decisions a priority with family and loved ones.

“The more that people have the conversations earlier about what they want at the end of the life, if they can figure that out ahead of time before a crisis hits, they have a better chance to live out those final days in the manner they want,” said Paula Morgen, community health director, ThedaCare.

An initiative was formed bringing together people from Affinity Health System, ThedaCare and the Coalition for Advance Care Planning.

“This is an effort to create one community-wide approach to how we prepare for end of life,” said Morgen, adding it aims “to make talking and planning about end of life desires as an integral part of family, spiritual, medical and educational life in an effort to respect each person’s end of life wishes.”

ThedaCare includes Appleton Medical Center and Theda Clark Medical Center.

For the last year, the end of life initiative has been working on common processes, common documents and common education for both the physicians and community.

Too often, many people spend their last days in an intensive care unit, said Morgen. “If you ask people they don’t want to spend their last days hooked up to machines,” she said. “They want to spend time with family, be surrounded with family and have conversations with people. It’s all about respect, dignity, honesty and integrity around those wishes.”

ThedaCare

# WHA Community Benefit Survey FY 2014 Financial Summary

Surveys representing 132 hospitals (100%)

## Community Benefits

Charity Care at Cost	\$278,585,184
Medicaid Shortfalls	\$899,927,725
Losses on Other Public Programs	\$19,665,376
Subsidized Health Services	\$107,510,405
Nursing Home Losses	\$15,170,219

## Benefit Category

## Participants or Units

Community Health Improvement Services		
<i>Community Health Education</i>	3,405,569	\$25,243,751
<i>Community Based Clinical Services</i>	266,108	\$21,638,652
<i>Health Care Support Services</i>	611,489	\$21,150,528
<i>Social &amp; Environmental Improvement Activities</i>	127,723	\$2,003,344
Total Community Health Improvement Services	4,410,899	\$70,036,275
Cash or In-Kind Donations	1,665,976	\$39,057,295
Loss on Health Professions Education/Workforce	44,654	\$217,952,212
Loss on Research	6,287	\$17,410,119
Community Building Activities	2,975,204	\$8,451,230
Community Benefit Operations	946,241	\$7,166,634

## TOTAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS\*

**\$1,680,932,674**

\* WHA has elected to follow CHA Community Benefit Guidelines, which excludes Medicare shortfalls and bad debt expense from the community benefit calculation. The statewide estimate for Medicare shortfalls was \$1,484,208,060 and bad debt at cost was 234,848,000 using 2014 data.

November 2015

Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at [www.WiServePoint.org](http://www.WiServePoint.org).



Wisconsin Hospitals:  
Connecting With Our Communities

For a national perspective on the value that hospitals bring to their communities,  
we encourage you to visit [www.caringforcommunities.org](http://www.caringforcommunities.org).

If you would like to learn more about Wisconsin hospitals connecting to their communities,  
visit [www.WiServePoint.org](http://www.WiServePoint.org).



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