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WISCONSIN HOSPITALS CARE:
Improving Health and Wellness
in Their Communities

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WISCONSIN HOSPITALS CARE: IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

A Message from WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding



Wisconsin's hospitals and health systems are much more than providers of nation-leading quality care. They're also vibrant members of the community, dedicated to ensuring overall health and well-being of the people they are privileged to serve.

We are obviously quite proud of the work that goes on inside hospital and clinic walls – access to high-quality care is something all citizens want for themselves, their family and their neighbors. Our hospitals and health

systems care about what goes on outside their walls, too – so we're also very proud about the report you're reading.

Health care in Wisconsin contributed more than **\$1.9 billion** in community benefits and charity care in 2018 in a wide variety of ways. Every corner of the state has a hospital or health care system helping their communities in specific areas of need. These institutions, their incredible staff and volunteers know that sometimes the only safety net available to a community comes from the hospital or health care system. As shown in this report, they embrace this mission and their role in improving the well-being of their neighbors and communities.

Thank you for taking the time to read about some of the wonderful efforts taking place right now in your community. Wisconsin hospitals and health care systems are mission-driven and dedicated to providing high-quality, affordable and accessible health care services, which help result in healthier Wisconsin communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Borgerding". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a stylized "B" and "G".

Eric Borgerding,
WHA President/CEO

**Every corner of the
state has a hospital
or health care
system helping their
communities in specific
areas of need.**

Community Benefit Fiscal Year 2018 Financial Summary

Community Benefits

Charity Care at Cost	\$184,534,921
Medicaid Shortfalls	\$1,206,188,625
Losses on Other Public Programs	\$39,838,192
Subsidized Health Services	\$136,627,175
Nursing Home Losses	\$11,458,856

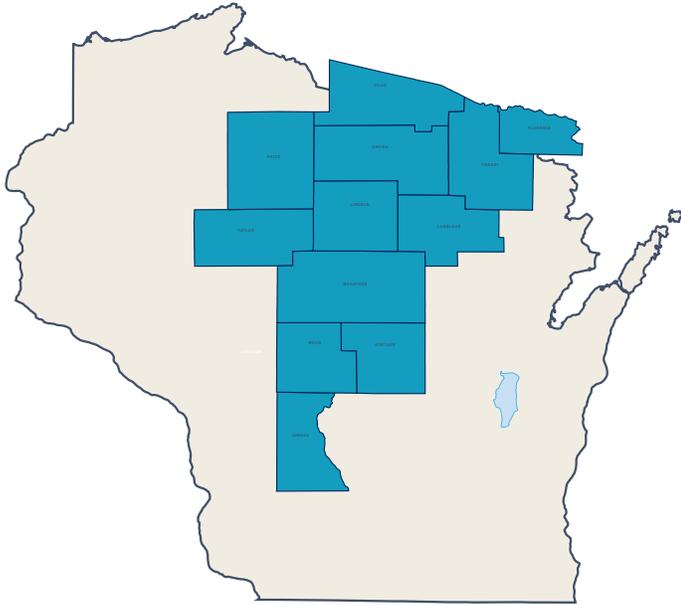
Benefit Category

Community Health Improvement Services	
<i>Community Health Education</i>	\$25,558,673
<i>Community-Based Clinical Services</i>	\$12,594,753
<i>Health Care Support Services</i>	\$24,494,482
<i>Social & Environmental Improvement Activities</i>	\$4,561,388
Total Community Health Improvement Services	\$67,209,296
Cash or In-Kind Donations	\$39,356,672
Loss on Health Professions Education/Workforce	\$283,485,958
Loss on Research	\$12,846,872
Community Building Activities	\$7,910,097
Community Benefit Operations	\$8,322,706

Total Community Benefits* **\$1,997,779,370**

* WHA follows CHA Community Benefit Guidelines, which excludes Medicare shortfalls and bad debt expense from the community benefit calculation. In fiscal year 2018, the statewide estimate for Medicare shortfalls was \$2,506,492,533 and bad debt at cost was \$227,655,465.

North Central Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:
\$164,283,544**

Prevention Fund Assists Patients With Emergent Needs and Connects them to Available Resources

For some people, making the decision each month of whether to purchase medications required to keep them alive and healthy or pay their heat bill is a real struggle. The Community Health Needs Assessment identified Access and Affordability of Healthcare Services as one of the top three health priorities for Langlade County.

In response, Aspirus Langlade Hospital established the Prevention Fund Program to provide limited financial assistance to patients with an immediate and emergent need to purchase medications, medical supplies or other immediate needs identified to reduce unnecessary visits to the emergency department, walk-in clinic, admissions or readmissions for patients who suffer from significant medical conditions such as infection, COPD, CHF, hypertension or diabetes. By providing this immediate assistance, the patient is allotted the time needed to apply for medication assistance programs available, while being able to take the medication immediately. Since the inception of the Prevention Fund Program, support has been provided in over 70 instances to patients that otherwise would have gone without the medication, medical supplies or treatment needed to treat a potential life-threatening issue.

The Prevention Fund continues to work with patients that are identified as “at risk” for being unable to support their financial needs. Each recipient who receives financial support through the Prevention Fund is given a letter and guidance on how to apply for medication assistance programs along with support from a social worker or case manager to help them seek and obtain future financial support.

Aspirus Langlade Hospital, Antigo

"Every Man for Himself" ...Not at Mile Bluff!

In a world where "every man for himself" is often expressed and lived out, it is refreshing to receive a helping hand when you find yourself in need of a little extra support. That relief was felt by 360 individuals who were assisted through Mile Bluff's charity care programs during the 2018 fiscal year.

Mile Bluff offers financial aid to ensure that all members of the community are able to access medically-necessary care, regardless of their ability to pay. Sometimes that help is provided in the form of reduced payments; other times it can mean full debt forgiveness. Regardless of the amount, recipients appreciate the assistance provided. Some individuals even send formal thanks to the team that helps them through the charity care process.

A few of the thanks received recently include:

- “Thank you for the community care assistance.”
- “It’s not my preference to ask for financial help. Nonetheless, I appreciate your help. Again, thank you!”
- “This is my final payment. Wahoo!! Thank you for your patience. Have a great day and keep up the good work you do.”

Over \$1 million of debt was forgiven by Mile Bluff through its charity care programs during the 2018 fiscal year. It is programs like this that prove that Mile Bluff doesn't live by the motto "every man for himself"; rather, Mile Bluff looks out for the needs of everyone in the community!

Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston



Photo courtesy of Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

Connecting Community: Hospital, Agency Partnership Addresses Rural Transportation

Without designated transit lines, rural community residents lacking personal transportation often struggle to meet basic needs.

Impacted are errands, like grocery shopping or doctor appointments, and time at religious institutions, libraries and fitness centers. But, transportation provides access to food, health care and social contact, especially in environments where neighbors can be miles apart.

In 2015, Flambeau Hospital in Park Falls, a critical access hospital cosponsored by Marshfield Clinic Health System and Ministry Health Care, part of Ascension Wisconsin, joined the Price County Transportation Council to ensure community access to basic needs.

After a year of planning, in collaboration with the hospital and local government agencies, Bay Area Rural Transit (B.A.R.T.) of Ashland purchased a bus and designated an on-demand bus route in Park Falls.

More like a taxi service than a traditional bus route, on-demand scheduling means flexible transportation for residents living within five miles of the city center during operating hours rather than on a designated timetable. The bus drops riders at their personal point of interest rather than a set stop.

In 2017, purchase of a second bus led to establishing a corresponding on-demand route in Phillips and linked the two communities with a traditional route.

Ridership is high in these locations and opens doors of opportunity, including catching connections to routes that take riders to Ashland and Bayfield counties.

Service in Price County expanded in 2019 to Prentice, encompassing the county. Thanks to hospital and county partnerships forging the way, Price County B.A.R.T. routes are connecting community.

Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

Lakeland Pantry and Howard Young Medical Center Partner to Provide Health Screenings

Howard Young Medical Center, part of Ascension, in collaboration with the Lakeland Pantry, has established a Health Committee to organize and deliver free health screenings to participants of the pantry.

“A Medical Mission Health Committee involving pantry and hospital leadership was created to develop a sustainable plan for the delivery of screenings and support services in alignment with our identified community health needs,” said Laurie Oungst, chief administrative officer for Howard Young Medical Center.

Based on county statistics, Vilas and Oneida counties have a higher percent of uninsured children and adults compared to the state average.



Leaders from Howard Young Medical Center, part of Ascension and the Lakeland Pantry gathered for a Ribbon Cutting for the new dedicated space for health screenings at the Lakeland Pantry.

“We recognize that lack of insurance can be a barrier to receiving care. In addition, access to healthy food and access to health services were the top two needs identified by low-income participants that completed a recent survey as part of our hospital’s Community Health Needs Assessment,” Oungst added.

The Committee has developed a plan to provide blood pressure checks and glucose checks to screen those with hypertension and diabetes – two leading chronic diseases in our community.

“We will connect those with screenings out of normal range to follow-up care,” explained Jacqui Monge, Howard Young Medical Center director of nursing and committee participant. “In addition to screenings, registered dieticians will be present to offer nutrition consults and encourage selection of healthy food choices by providing samples and recipes.”

Roughly 1,300 individuals are served by the Lakeland Pantry each month, and many will benefit from health services and resources. The health screenings and educational offerings are available three times per month.

Howard Young Medical Center, part of Ascension, Woodruff

Boots to Work Breaks Down Barriers and Improves Self-Sufficiency in Marathon County

After preparing and interviewing for a new position, Ronald received a great offer for a career at a local manufacturer. His only barrier to employment—purchasing a pair of steel toe boots.

Fortunately, Ronald was able to accept the job offer, because he acquired a pair of steel toe boots from the United Way Emerging Leaders Boots to Work Program. Ronald worked with the staffing agency to fill out a Boots to Work voucher

and provided his proof of employment when visiting the program site. He was then fitted with a proper pair of boots and was able to start his new career the next day.

Ronald and 410 others have been serviced through the Boots to Work Program since it began in August 2016. Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital in Weston has been an ongoing financial supporter of this program.

“This collaborative program allows emerging leaders to purchase new quality steel toe boots by partnering with local businesses in the area,” said Patti Shafto-Carlson, director of community outreach at Ascension St. Clare’s. “The boots provided assist individuals in need by breaking down a barrier to employment in assisting with a costly item.”



Items provided to Boots to Work Participants

But more importantly she says, this program assists with the overall health and well-being of an individual by encouraging their self-sufficiency and the confidence that comes with being gainfully employed.

James, a client served in 2019, said “I appreciate this more than you know. Thank you for everything you’ve done.” Helping individuals like James is made possible through the generous support of Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital.

Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital, Weston

Tri-County Coaster Campaign Promotes Mental Health Services for Men in Northwoods

According to the 2016 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data, suicide rates for males 55-64 years old is the 8th leading cause of death.

Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data ranks Vilas County as the second highest (per 100,000) rate in Wisconsin, which is almost double the national rate at 21.2/100,000. Oneida County has a rate of 16.5/100,000 and Forest County is 12.7/100,000.

This past winter, a tri-county effort was kicked off through a coaster campaign in bars and taverns that focused on men getting help for mental health concerns, such as depression and anxiety.

The strategy is provided by the Community, Outreach, Prevention, Education Coalition (COPE). The Coalition is a tri-county effort in Forest, Oneida and Vilas counties, that provides education, prevention and outreach on the issues of mental health and AODA.

"This is one of the strategies for suicide prevention for middle-aged males," stated Tammi Boers, Vilas County Public Health Department. "The coaster is a resource that may provide hope to someone and possibly save a life."



One side of the coaster being distributed to bars and taverns

1-800-273-TALK (8255), so they have access to support 24 hours/day, 7 days/week," said Heidi Pritzl, licensed clinical social worker, Ascension Koller Behavioral Health.

"It takes a village, and we would like to sincerely thank all bars and taverns that supported this strategy in our three counties."

**Ascension Eagle River Hospital, Eagle River
Ascension St. Mary's Hospital, Rhinelander
Howard Young Medical Center, part of Ascension, Woodruff**

Marshfield Clinic Health System Provides Resources for Suicide Prevention, Training

Marshfield Clinic Health System has *Zero Suicide* resources, programs and trainings in place to heighten awareness of this issue.



Jennifer Moroskie, A Better Way Clubhouse, Marshfield, ties a green ribbon to a tree. She and 33 volunteers tied ribbons in Marshfield which are meant to remind residents that September is Suicide Prevention Month.

Zero Suicide began as a key concept of 2012's National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. It became a priority of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and a project of Education Development Center's Suicide Prevention Resource Center, supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The Health System hosted events in September, Suicide Prevention Month, to help educate and provide resources. "This work matters and there are many people suffering in silence," said Jodi Chojnacki, health educator in the Health System's Center for Community Health Advancement (CCHA).

Efforts included:

- Coordinating volunteers at two community locations to distribute suicide information.
- Marshfield Area Coalition for Youth (MACY) and CCHA featuring a documentary, *Kids in Crisis: You're Not Alone*, and panel discussion. MACY's Mental Health Workgroup and CCHA hosted the nationally recognized documentary as part of a Mental Health Matters campaign. A panel of local mental health experts discussed topics raised in the film, answered audience questions and shared expanded mental health resources.
- The Health System, through CCHA, offering Question, Persuade & Refer (QPR) suicide trainings in Marshfield.

- A green ribbon campaign promoting suicide awareness, showing those who struggle with depression, anxiety or mental illness that the community supports them and hopes for their healing. Trees with green ribbons lined major thoroughfares in Marshfield. “Mental Health Matters” posters with green ribbons were placed at schools, businesses and agencies.

Marshfield Medical Center, Marshfield

Marshfield Clinic Health System, North Central Health Care Partner on AmeriCorps Recovery Corps Initiative

Marshfield Clinic Health System Recovery Corps is the first AmeriCorps program in the nation to address substance abuse by engaging individuals with recovery experience as members.



2018/19 AmeriCorps Recovery Corps members

Marshfield Clinic Health System and North Central Health Care (NCHC) have partnered, through an AmeriCorps grant, to expand Recovery Corps Recovery Coaching initiative to central Wisconsin.

NCHC annually provides care for over 12,500 people in Marathon, Langlade and Lincoln counties, including those with mental health and substance abuse issues.

NCHC is hosting four AmeriCorps Recovery coaches who will be trained through the nationally-recognized Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) model of recovery coaching. Their work will serve to reduce prescription drug, opioid and other substance use disorders through one-on-one contact, outreach phone calls and community education.

Recovery coaches, through this peer-based service, will help individuals seek recovery from a substance use disorder as well as their friends, families and communities. They work to

promote recovery services, support the recovery community and reduce stigma. They may work together with local prevention groups in schools, tribes and through educational events.

These evidence-based services, shown to enhance engagement, access and treatment completion to help increase long-term recovery, may be provided directly to individuals, in a group setting or both, and may take place in a professional or private setting.

Recovery Corps coaches also work in the HOPE Consortium service area – Oneida, Vilas, Forest, Price and Iron counties and Forest County Potawatomi, Lac du Flambeau Chippewa and Sokaogon Chippewa Tribal Nations.

Marshfield Clinic Health System, Northcentral Region

Helping Address Social Determinants and Basic Needs in Partnership with Community Organization

In an education series through the American Hospital Association, a main topic and focus has been on food insecurity and the role of hospitals. Because only 20% of health can be attributed to medical care, hospitals are recognizing the effects socio-economic factors have on health.

Food insecurity is a social determinant of health that is affecting more than 15.8 million households in America. It is linked to chronic conditions like obesity and diabetes and can delay child development.

Aspirus Langlade Hospital has partnered with Boys and Girls Club to support their summer programming by providing food insecurity resources as well as providing other basic needs of being clean and having a safe place to be. With this partnership, the club can offer over 150 youth with snacks and meals Monday through Friday during summer, provide more than 60 kids with breakfast and lunch during non-school days and help teach kids the importance of healthy eating and daily exercise.

In addition to food, the Boys and Girls club expressed the need to provide kids with clean clothes. Several club members are unable to wash their clothes and tend to wear the same clothes multiple days in a row. This is either due to not having a washer and dryer at their home or their parents are not around to teach them proper hygiene. Now with a washer and dryer, the club staff can teach club members how to properly wash clothing, teach about hygiene and provide them with clean clothes to wear.

Aspirus Langlade Hospital, Antigo

Hydroponics and Gleaning are Expanding Nutrition Knowledge in Merrill

For several years, Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital in Merrill has played a key role in providing resources to promote healthier living through nutrition in Lincoln County.



A student at Jefferson Elementary collecting their first harvest in October 2018.

As part of a community-based coalition, past efforts have included cooking classes that provided free appliances to those in need, funding for new water bottle refill stations and improved access to a local farmers market.

This year, Ascension Good Samaritan and its community partners pursued another tactic by funding the construction of hydroponic units for seven Merrill schools.

“This was an exciting project which resulted in 80 pounds of fresh produce to be used within the school system,” said Jane Bentz, director of community outreach and volunteer services at Ascension Good Samaritan. “Sixty-five percent of students reported an increase in knowledge of gardening because of the project.”

Internally, Ascension Good Samaritan launched a program aimed at supporting those in need by Gleaning.

Gleaning is the act of collecting excess fresh foods from farms, gardens, hospital cafeterias, farmers markets, grocers, restaurants, state/county fairs, or any other source to provide it to those in need.

According to Feed America, each year, more than 1.1 billion pounds of food goes to waste in Wisconsin. According to the Food Recovery Network, 150,000 pounds of food are wasted

in restaurants and 133 billion pounds across the nation annually, while one in five children are food insecure.

“Ascension Good Samaritan has donated over 2,400 pounds of excess food from our hospital cafeteria to those in need,” said Bentz. “We are sharing our successes with Ascension facilities statewide and providing technical assistance to expand this effort, so they too can help those in need in their community.”

[Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital, Merrill](#)

Kids Fit Program Exceeds Expectations

For many years, Ascension St. Michael’s Hospital and the Stevens Point YMCA have been partnering to improve the health and wellness of children with interactive programs.

Keeping kids engaged and active can be a challenging task and the launch of a new Kids Fit Afterschool program exceeded expectations in its first year.

“Kids Fit is a fun and interactive health education program for school-aged children focused on improving changes in their diet, exercise and overall wellness as well as decrease their risk of obesity, improve cardiovascular health and physical fitness, and increase nutritional knowledge,” said Margo Willard, director of community outreach at Ascension St. Michael’s. “It’s designed to encourage and develop healthy habits through hands-on play and learning.”



Kids Fit Afterschool uses a variety of cognitive, behavioral and physical activity techniques to help children make successive, small behavior changes toward physical activity and nutrition that are sustainable.

This program includes 20 minutes of physical activity designed by a YMCA certified personal trainer and administered twice each week to engage and promote physical activity behaviors. Also, a 30-minute nutrition education lesson will be facilitated once a week by a nutrition educator.

“The goals of this program are to further create activity in children as well as to increase their nutrition knowledge in healthy eating,” said Willard. “By the end of the 12-week program, children will become more self-nurturing, improve their physical activity and build a more positive body image.”

The program is administered at all eight of the YMCA’s Afterschool child care sites in the Stevens Point area.

An average of 205 participants in the program engaged in 20 minutes or more of physical activity twice a week for two 12-week periods (fall and spring). This was 75 more participants than originally anticipated.

Ascension St. Michael’s Hospital, Stevens Point

“Prescription for Health” Program

Over the past four years, Aspirus and Aspirus Arise have worked in partnership with the community to offer a “Prescription for Health” program. Staff members identify patients that would benefit from this program and give them a prescription worth \$20 that can be redeemed at area farmers markets to purchase fresh produce. An example of the impact this program has is demonstrated by the following testimonial submitted from a staff member:

“A low-income family encountered a setback when their family’s food stamps were cut back because of the mother’s employment. This limited their ability to buy the fresh produce the family enjoys since they were on a much tighter budget. The family was so excited to get the \$20 voucher for fresh fruits & veggies so that they would have food to eat for a few more days. The mom realized that she could spend the family’s food stamps on protein & receive lots of vegetables & fruits with the prescription program. The Nurse Care coordinator educated the patient & family on the importance of healthy food choices & encouraged good nutrition though fresh fruits & vegetables for overall good health & well-being. The mom involved her children in the process & encouraged them each to buy vegetables because she recognized that they then wanted to eat what they bought! Her son picked out Brussels sprouts & the daughter picked out green beans & squash. Mother said it was great because each time they went, they would pick out a vegetable and they actually ate them! Family, community, and health all wrapped into one!”

Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau

Farm to Table Event Raises Profile of Healthy Choices and Tomahawk Farmers Market

The Lincoln County Nutrition Coalition has spent the past few years expanding its programs and offerings to connect with various segments of the community.

In 2018, a new partnership with Tomahawk Main Street engaged more than 100 local children and families with a Farm to Table event that was designed to provide awareness to elementary students of the importance of supporting the Downtown Farmers Market to incorporate healthy lifestyle choices.



“Potato Kid”: A Tomahawk Farm-to-Table student shows off the group’s potato harvest.

“This program was really about raising awareness and education on our Downtown Farmers Market and the community impact of buying locally grown foods,” said Hope Williams, a registered dietitian and community benefit coordinator at Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital.

Students were brought to a local community garden at Grace Lutheran Church a block from downtown where they learned about how to grow their own garden, help harvest and ways to volunteer. They also found out that some of the plants are from the school greenhouse and some of the harvested foods go in the after-school backpack program to feed needy children on the weekends.

Afterwards they were provided lunch at a downtown restaurant, where they learned that eating healthy is easy when going out. A large salad bar and gluten free soups were some of the options available and they also learned about downtown beautification efforts and ways to volunteer as they walked to the Downtown Farmers Market.

“At the market they learned what it took to be a vendor and what a wide variety of items are available from the vendors,” said Williams. “Students were told the importance of having a walkable downtown and good mix of businesses so when someone came to the farmers market, they could spend an entire day downtown.”

According to Main Street Tomahawk following the Farm to Table event, the Downtown Farmers Market had a 700% increase in sales for the remaining weeks of the market compared to 2017.

[Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital, Tomahawk](#)

“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child with a Disability”

Our Village Playground located inside Medford City Park has been a journey filled with many statements about our community and people who live here. The journey has seen dedication, commitment, effort, hope and inspiration from our local village in making this playground happen.

The project officially began in November 2016 with the first community meeting on the concept. Aspirus Medford and its partner organization, Memorial Member Association (MMA) felt drawn to the project and saw it as an investment in our City Park and community. It was for this reason that Aspirus Medford provided representation on the planning committee from the start.

What followed was a period of planning before the committee launched a wide-ranging fundraising campaign. Dozens of individuals and businesses contributed to the project. MMA and Aspirus Medford Hospital came forward with donations totaling \$130,000 to make the playground possible.

“Our community understands how to come together to collaboratively support a project, that creating accessibility for all is important, and making a difference can be done. It is a symbol for which we all can be proud and a celebration of who we represent,” said Our Village Playground Committee Chair Joseph Greget.

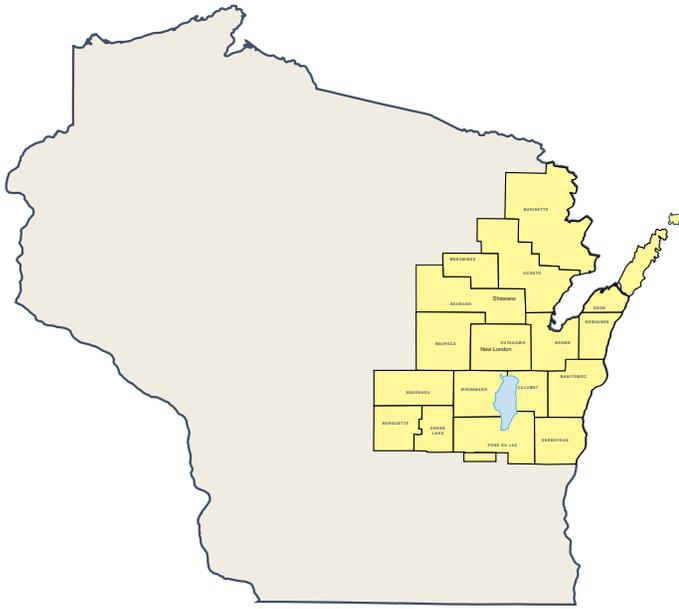
Aspirus Medford and MMA are excited to support this project as it is a great investment in our children, families, community, city and county. The ribbon cutting for the Our Village Playground took place July 2019.

[Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics](#)



Our Village Playground Ribbon Cutting

Packerland Region



Total Region Community Benefits:
\$242,164,588

A Helping Hand to Avoid an Emergency Visit

Chad was admitted to our hospital through the emergency department and was an inpatient for a week. Chad did not have insurance, so the financial advocate visited him during his hospital stay and completed an assessment to determine his eligibility for financial assistance.

Chad was over the income limit for Medicaid and could not afford Marketplace insurance – something that our financial advocates see often. His wife did not enroll him under her employer’s medical plan because she couldn’t afford the extra fees they would have to pay if he were added to her plan. When our financial advocate was able to approve him for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program, Chad cried.

Chad has many chronic diseases including COPD and diabetes that he has been struggling to manage due to the cost of his medical services. In fact, he came to our emergency department because he was denied follow-up care with another medical facility due to an outstanding balance that was over \$70,000 and did not want to continue adding to his debt with that facility.

Chad continues to work with an Aurora primary care provider and has been successful in managing his chronic diseases with his physician, avoiding additional visits to the emergency department.

Aurora Medical Center in Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

Hopeful Recovery

While receiving rehabilitation treatment at Ascension NE Wisconsin – Mercy Campus in Oshkosh, Natalie*, a single, 64-year-old woman, learned she needed additional testing to diagnose potential peripheral neuropathy in her legs. The result of damage to the nerves outside of the brain and spinal cord, peripheral neuropathy can cause weakness, numbness and pain.

Natalie was uninsured at the time, not yet Medicare eligible and was gravely concerned how she was going to get the tests needed to identify and treat her illness.

Working closely with her financial assistance counselor, Mary, Natalie was approved for financial assistance. Knowing her financial burden was lifted, she was able to concentrate on getting healthy. In addition to financial assistance, Mary helped Natalie receive assistance for oxygen treatment, ambulance services, and visiting nurses who provided her in-home physical and occupational therapies.

Natalie has progressed very well in therapy and can once again drive her car and mow her lawn – pieces of her independence she lost when she was first diagnosed. Because she’s more active, Natalie has lost 50 pounds.

“This program literally saved my life. I am incredibly grateful to the team at Ascension Mercy and I don’t know how I could ever repay them,” said Natalie. “I am completely overwhelmed and grateful.”

Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus, Oshkosh

A Helping Hand When There are No Other Options

For some, it feels easier to ignore medical symptoms than to pay a medical bill. Unfortunately, deferring medical attention can lead to more costly outcomes, including death.

Robert had not been feeling well for a while but had avoided going to the doctor because he had no insurance, even though he worked. Finally, after weeks of increasing difficulties completing his job each day, Robert’s employer insisted he seek medical care.

When Robert met with the doctors in the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, he insisted he was fine and wanted to leave. However, upon completion of his medical exam, the ED physician determined Robert had a severe infection that could lead to death if it continued to be left untreated. Robert was admitted as a hospital inpatient so that he could receive intravenous antibiotics, which he would need for a few weeks.



Aware of his insurance status and his need for immediate care, the financial advocate expedited the application process for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. Robert's Aurora Helping Hand approval meant that he could get the life-saving treatment he needed at no cost to him.

When he received news of his approval, Robert cried, "You all are angels and your work is just as important as any doctor or nurse in the building. Thank you!"

[Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center](#)

A Helping Hand for a Healing Heart

Roger, 36, is newly divorced with two children. One of his children is with him full-time, and he shares custody of his second child with his ex-wife. Although it hasn't been easy for him, he has been able to support his family with income from his part-time job.

Being employed part-time made him ineligible for benefits through his employer, yet his income was too high to qualify for benefits through the state or Medicaid. He's been applying for full-time employment, but has not been successful in finding a full-time position yet. Roger is a healthy guy, so he was hoping to make it for a while without coverage.

Unfortunately, the unexpected happened: Roger arrived in the hospital emergency department with chest pain and was immediately admitted. He ended up requiring open heart surgery, which resulted in Coronary Artery Bypass.

During his stay, Roger worked with the financial advocate to apply for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program and was approved for a 100 percent discount on the medical services he received.

"Being approved for Aurora Helping Hand has given me a chance to get back on my feet without worrying about how I was going to pay another bill outside of the bills I already have for me at home. My family and I are so thankful for the program and the doctors that saved my life."

[Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay](#)

HSHS St. Vincent, St. Mary's Hospitals Assist in Efforts to Curb Opioid Abuse

For someone battling an opioid abuse disorder, breaking the cycle of addiction is a powerful step toward getting their freedom back. Incarceration can provide a window of opportunity to begin the recovery process.

"In jail, people have likely gone through withdrawal. Once this happens, they are eligible for a medication-assisted treatment program," explains Jeff Stumbras, behavioral care clinical director for HSHS - Eastern Wisconsin Division and Prevea Health.

Thanks to a community-wide effort and an \$85,000 donation from HSHS St. Vincent Hospital and HSHS St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center in Green Bay, people who may otherwise not be able to afford treatment are provided a potentially life-changing opportunity.

The donation helps cover the cost of the medication that is administered to people with an opioid abuse disorder while in jail. The medication blocks the effects of opioids and significantly reduces cravings, making it easier to break addiction.

To further increase success rates, the donation also funds scholarships to the Jackie Nitschke Center – a residential substance abuse treatment center in Green Bay. A scholarship covers up to one month of treatment.



Scholarships, funded by a donation from HSHS St. Vincent and St. Mary's hospitals, cover up to one month of treatment at the Jackie Nitschke Center in Green Bay.

The scholarship program was implemented as part of the TIP (Treatment, Intervention and Prevention) Program, which brings together organizations that provide services in hopes of turning offenders into contributing members of the community. From December 2015 to December 2018, nine people received scholarships for treatment.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, more people (916) died from opioid-related overdoses than car crashes (594) in 2017, showing resources, such as the TIP Program, are needed.

[HSHS St. Vincent and St. Mary's Hospitals, Green Bay](#)

A Letter of Appreciation for a Helping Hand

Dear Aurora Financial Advocate,

I injured myself in a kayaking accident and had been dealing with a lot of neck pain. I didn't seek medical care when the accident happened because I didn't have insurance and was scared about the cost of care.

I endured the pain for a long time, but it began to affect my work. I work in construction so working less hours means earning less income, which was also adding stress to my situation. I decided it was time to get help and I went to the Emergency Department at Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh.

While I was in the hospital, you met with me and helped me apply for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. Through the program approval, I was able to get all the medical care I needed. I'm now back at work full-time.

My life has improved a lot since my visit to the hospital, and it's all thanks to you, the Aurora Helping Hand program and all the other people who took care of me at the hospital.

Thank you for caring.

*Sincerely,
-A Grateful Patient*

[Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh](#)

Safe Mom Safe Baby

Sexual and intimate partner violence can have harmful and lasting consequences for survivors, families and communities including, but not limited to, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, long term physical consequences, immediate and chronic psychological consequences, health behavior risks and financial cost to survivors, families and communities.

Safe Mom Safe Baby (SMSB), is an Abuse Response program that addresses the needs of pregnant women experiencing domestic violence. It combines nurse case management by nurse examiners who are sexual assault nurse examiners, prenatal and perinatal care, and advocacy services to enhance the health and safety of abused pregnant women and improve birth outcomes. SMSB draws upon the expertise of our hospital's forensic nurse examiners and other local Sheboygan County partner agencies.

In 2018, we introduced the SMSB program at our hospital and provided intensive support services to three women to increase their safety and the safety of their babies. Through this support we were able to help these women reach full-term and birth babies who are within normal birth weight ranges.

[Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center](#)

Telemedicine to Provide Greater Access to Addiction Treatment in Northern Wisconsin

To be most effective, treatment for substance use disorders requires time. When patients need to travel long distances to receive care, time can become a barrier to recovery.

HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital in Oconto Falls, Prevea Health and Libertas Treatment Center in Marinette are working together to bring treatment to a larger geographical area, using telemedicine.

Patients will be able to receive one-on-one counseling, visits with their doctor and case management support through the use of video screens. The hope is patients continue with their treatment for a longer period of time, leading to better outcomes for patients.

The program is expected to be operational by early 2020.



HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital currently uses telemedicine technology to provide an enhanced level of stroke and emergency care.

Ten sites in Northern Wisconsin will participate in the rollout of the telemedicine program, including treatment centers at the Florence County Human Services building and at a Menominee Tribal Clinic.

However, patients will have their initial appointments at Libertas Treatment Center in Marinette, which allows for case managers, counselors, doctors and nurses to establish a relationship with the patient. From there, care is determined on a case-to-case basis.

Telemedicine will also help some patients who receive medication as part of their treatment. Medication Assisted Treatment requires careful monitoring to make sure patients stay on track and use the medication appropriately. When medication is taken correctly, it can help curb cravings.

HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital is providing funding for Libertas to receive the necessary certification from the State of Wisconsin for the telemedicine program.

[HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls](#)

Providing School-Based Therapy Helps Kids Participate to Their Fullest Potential

Having healthy kids requires the combined efforts of families, schools, health care providers and community agencies. At Children's Wisconsin, our work extends beyond the walls of our hospitals and clinics. Our community partnerships are crucial to improving community health and well-being.

To best support kids who require physical and occupational therapy in order to function optimally in the school environment, nearly 20 Children's Wisconsin therapists provide school-based care at schools in the Kaukauna, Kimberly, Little Chute, Neenah and Shiocton districts. The physical and occupational therapists work with students in both regular and special education settings to support students' individualized education plans and ensure they're able to participate to the best of their abilities.

Therapists evaluate the child's ability to move throughout the school and participate in classroom activities, as well as help implement interventions to help the child participate as independently as possible. In collaboration with parents, teachers and other educational staff, therapists help students navigate everything from different floor levels, restrooms and the cafeteria to participating in recess and sports. Occupational and physical therapy interventions help the child in both academic and non-academic settings, aiming to ensure the child can fulfill their role as a student.

Children's therapists build strong relationships with students, families and educational staff, strengthening the teams supporting kids in schools. School-based occupational and physical therapists are an important part of a student's special education team and have a direct impact on students successfully meeting their short- and long-term goals.

[Children's Wisconsin-Fox Valley Hospital, Neenah](#)

A Night Out for Dinner and CPR

The following story is being shared by Mercedes Tucker, digital marketing coordinator with C.D. Smith Construction, Inc. who took advantage of a CPR and First Aid course offered through Agnesian Work & Wellness.



Mercedes Tucker

You've probably heard a friend, family member or co-worker say, "I learned CPR years ago, but thankfully I have never had to use it." Or perhaps something along the lines of, "I could probably use a CPR refresher; I don't know if I would know what to do if someone had a heart attack." Maybe you've heard yourself say one of these phrases.

About three months ago, our company safety director sent out a request to staff asking if anyone would be interested in joining the safety committee for our new office building. Committee participants would take two evening classes to get CPR and First Aid certified. I had been certified in CPR and First Aid over a decade or more ago, but never found the time to get recertified. I always wanted to, I just kept making excuses and was "too busy."

I decided it was time to stop making excuses.

The courses were easy and informative. The instructional videos were very detailed and visual, explaining what you could expect if you encountered a medical emergency. And the instructors were very knowledgeable and engaging. We practiced CPR on the mannequins, and while a bit awkward, very impactful.

A month passed after my training and I was out to dinner with my husband and some of our friends. We were enjoying our meal when I had a flashback to the video we had watched in my CPR class. A woman cried, "He's not breathing! Help! Does anyone know CPR? PLEASE, SOMEONE HELP!"

I was in shock, thinking this isn't really happening. I looked around to see if anyone was responding to the woman's cries. But no one was making a move, all in disbelief. I took a big breath and realized it was going to have to be me who responds.

The gentleman was slouched over in a chair, unresponsive. The woman explained he was complaining of chest and back pains, then he sat down and stopped breathing. While she began calling 911, I tapped on the man and said "Sir, can you hear me?"

No response.

I called for my husband and our friends to help me get him out of the chair. It took four of us to safely lay the man on the ground. I checked for normal breathing, but nothing. I then immediately went into chest compressions, counting out loud, "one, two, three, four, five, six..." Once I got to 30, I paused and checked for breathing, still nothing. Again, "one, two, three, four, five, six..." And again, "One! Two! Three..!"

I was interrupted part way through my fourth rep of compressions when an EMT arrived and said, "We'll take it from here; good job." Relieved, I stepped aside and waited. The realization of what had just happened hit me. I found myself shaking with adrenaline, hoping the gentleman would pull through. The EMTs loaded him into the ambulance and rushed him off to the hospital for further treatment.

Because of everyone's quick action and prompt delivery of CPR, we gave the man the best possible chance for survival. His condition was so severe he needed to be airlifted to Milwaukee the night of the event. It has been three weeks since the incident, and he is on his way to recovery. That may have never been possible if I hadn't learned CPR a month earlier.

You never know when you'll need to jump into action. One night you might be out to dinner with friends and find yourself performing life-saving CPR. Take it from me, by taking a few hours out of your busy schedule to get trained, retrained or refreshed on CPR, you could save someone's life. So what's stopping you?

[Agnesian HealthCare, a member of SSM Health](#)

Addressing Transportation as a Community Health Need

Transportation barriers can affect a person's access to health care services, resulting in missed or delayed health care appointments, future health expenses, and negative health outcomes. Additionally, transportation may be directly related to social determinants of health such as poverty, access to education and employment opportunities or even housing.

There is a growing recognition that improving transportation resources and support for patients can help improve health outcomes and lower expenses. Transportation barriers to health care access include infrastructure, cost, vehicle access, distance or time schedules and policy (budget cuts to local transportation services or barriers to obtaining a driver's license). These are issues that can affect both urban and rural communities.

These are challenges for some residents of Manitowoc County who experience limitations and barriers that make it difficult for them to get to their appointments. Aurora Medical Center responds by providing complimentary transportation for those who need access to the hospital for the services they need.

In 2018, the hospital provided 1,655 complimentary rides to individuals who lacked resources for transportation to access the health care they need.

Aurora Medical Center - Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit

Five years ago, associates at Ascension Calumet Hospital in Chilton found a way to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables by using vacant land outside the hospital. Of the 1.7 acres, about half an acre was dedicated to a community garden. The rest of the land around the garden is rented by a local farmer.

“We started off small with a gardening committee of associates, Master Gardeners through UW-Extension and volunteers,” said Jenny Watts, leader, Regional Community Health Improvement at Ascension Calumet Hospital. “The committee hosted workshops for people who were interested in gardening and learning more about cultivating fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to help reduce obesity.”

Over the years, the garden has continued to grow and the committee has found new ways to fund the initiative. Of the 30 raised beds in the garden, half were sold to community members and half to Ascension Calumet associates for their weekly Farmers Market. Hosted right outside the hospital’s cafeteria, all produce is sold for \$1. One-hundred percent



Ascension Calumet Hospital’s Community Garden produces broccoli, kohlrabi, tomatoes, carrots, corn, cucumbers, cilantro, basil, parsley, sunflowers, zucchini, lettuce, summer squash, onions and jalapenos.

of the funds raised through the beds and produce sold is invested back into the garden. For example, the committee is considering investing in an efficient, self-sustaining watering system next year.

“We know proper nutrition is critical to overall health and wellness,” said Watts. “By increasing access to fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs, we’re cultivating wellness conversations and working to reduce obesity in our community.”

Ascension Calumet Hospital, Chilton

Addressing alcohol and drug misuse

Alcohol and drug misuse rank among the top five health issues for Brown County. In 2016, 27% of adults reported engaging in binge drinking. In addition, 58% of Brown County’s traffic deaths are alcohol related. To help address this in 2018, we:

- Participated in the Beyond Health Brown County Alcohol and Drug Coalition for Change in collaboration with other area hospitals, the Wisconsin Department of Human Services’ Division of Public Health, Brown County United Way, and local health departments. In 2018, this group developed awareness and education videos highlighting four community members who shared their stories of personal struggles with drugs or alcohol. In 2019, the coalition is including youth alcohol and drug misuse within their focus as vaping is up 124% among high schoolers in Brown County.
- Launched an Aurora Health Care Medical Group Suboxone Clinic to treat opioid drug addiction within the community. This clinic has already helped several community members.
- Hosted A Cause to Celebrate fundraising event to benefit the Jackie Nitschke Center, a local alcohol and other drug abuse treatment center. The event raised \$83,000. The funds went toward the renovation of a new sober living facility. This is the second consecutive year the A Cause to Celebrate fundraising event focused on addressing alcohol and drug misuse.

These are just a few examples of local efforts to address unhealthy alcohol and drug use in Brown County. Through further community collaboration, there are more initiatives underway.

Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay

Luxemburg-Casco School District / Bellin Health, Mental Health Partnership



Left to right: Jody Anderson, Bellin Health; Michael Snowberry, Director of Learning Services; Jennifer Koch, Primary School Counselor

After losing a student to suicide, the Luxemburg-Casco School District developed a comprehensive district-level team to tackle mental health issues head on, and Bellin Health was there to help support their efforts.

Working together, Luxemburg-Casco and Bellin developed a partnership to actively try to prevent mental health issues before they'd require a counselor's intervention.

"The idea was to create a psychologically safe environment and culture that would extend beyond the walls of the school and into the community," said Mike Snowberry, Luxemburg-Casco's director of learning services. "Bellin has helped us broaden that reach for maximum school and community impact."

One of the partnership's primary prevention efforts is a program called Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). School counselor Jennifer Koch has trained more than 125 school district staff members in the MHFA curriculum, which teaches individuals who work with children to identify signs of mental health concerns and take action when signs of distress are evident.

Bellin Health Community Nurse Activator Jody Anderson has played a key role in spreading the MHFA message through the school district and beyond.

"It's critically important to get outside the walls of the clinic and hospital," Anderson said, "and get to where people live, work and play."

Luxemburg-Casco and Bellin continue to work together to address mental health through prevention and intervention. The goal? A healthier tomorrow for district and community alike.

[Bellin Health, Green Bay](#)

Kids Kamp 2019

Agnesian HealthCare's Bereavement Services hosted the 19th annual Kids Kamp in mid-June.

The focus of Kids Kamp is to show grieving children that they are not alone in the grief emotions they may be experiencing. The death of a loved one at any age is difficult. Kids Kamp allows children to have an open dialogue about the love and memories they hold onto from their loved one who has died.

Kids Kamp 2019 welcomed 23 children ranging in age from 5 to 12 years old. Additionally, three bereavement specialists, one nurse, three full-time volunteers, two therapy dogs, two drum circle leaders, one fisherman and one lifeguard were at Kids Kamp. We are blessed to have supportive volunteers each year; without their support, we would not be able to offer the same experience for the children who attend.

Watching the children run around, play, fish, yell and just be kids even though they are going through so much is what Kids Kamp is about.



Bereavement Kids Kamp 2019

The Bereavement Center would not be able to provide this meaningful experience to the children if it weren't for the generosity of the Agnesian HealthCare Foundation as well as the incredible group of volunteers that we were blessed to have join us at Kids Kamp.

[Agnesian HealthCare, a member of SSM Health](#)

Cancer Outreach

The 2010-2014 cancer age-adjusted incidence rate in Winnebago County was 471.7 per 100,000 population, higher compared to the state at 452 per 100,000. Early detection is important to reduce the spread of the disease and maximize the impact of treatment. Cancer awareness, education and screenings provide opportunities for community members to better understand their risks of developing certain cancers, what symptoms to be aware of and how to advocate for themselves if they find themselves facing a possible cancer diagnosis.

In 2018, our hospital hosted and supported multiple cancer-related community outreach programs. Some examples include:

- 43 skin cancer screenings were provided at Fond du Lac Senior Center in September. There were 37 findings for which referrals to follow-up support were provided.
- 19 mammograms completed at the Breast Night Ever event in October.
- 568 low-dose lung cancer screenings were provided.
- 8,187 mammograms were provided.
- 7 educational booths at health fairs were provided, most of which were offered in collaboration with employer groups such as the City of Oshkosh, University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, and Durafibre.
- 2 HPV educational sessions were provided for 40 community members. All were engaged and asked questions.
- 4 educational articles were written and published with local media outlets.
- 3 on-site breast cancer presentations were provided within the community.



Cancer survivors attend the “Power of Touch” talk presented by an Aurora Cancer Care team member.

Our goal is to reach community members before they start experiencing symptoms so we can prevent illness or improve outcomes for patients and community members.

Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh

Holy Family Memorial Launches Community-wide Step Challenge

This past spring, Holy Family Memorial hosted Move Manitowoc—a community-wide step challenge to promote health through walking. Area businesses and organizations in Manitowoc County were invited to join the month-long challenge in May during Global Health & Fitness Month with each team competing to achieve the highest average daily steps.



The Move Manitowoc step challenge raised \$2,750 for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Eastern Wisconsin, Inc.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week for optimal health. Striving for 10,000 steps a day can help individuals reduce their risk for chronic health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes.

The challenge was a great opportunity for local organizations to invest in the employees’ health and at the same time raise money for a good cause. Eleven area businesses competed to achieve the highest average daily number of steps and earn money for their charity of choice. 283 participants walked a total of 82,755,709 steps or approximately 41,377 miles—which equates to walking 1.5 times around the Earth.

KDC/One Northern Labs achieved the highest average daily number of steps and donated all competition proceeds, \$2,750, to the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Eastern Wisconsin, Inc.

“We were thrilled to see employers in Manitowoc County community invest in employee health and engage in healthy workplace behaviors,” says Brett Norell, president and CEO at Holy Family Memorial. “Small, daily improvements are the key to long-term health and happiness; we hope this step-challenge created lasting improvements in our community’s health.”

Holy Family Memorial, Inc., Manitowoc

April Food Drive to Help Enhance Diets, Reduce Readmissions

The Quality Assessment Performance Improvement and Hospital Readmissions committees of the St. Agnes Hospital Home Care department have been focusing on methods to reduce hospital readmissions, specifically for those patients with congestive heart failure and diabetes.



Food drive for the Fondy Food Pantry

It was identified that a subset of Home Care patients is financially unable to comply with specific diets; some of which had high readmissions rates or were identified as being a high risk for hospitalizations. Additionally, due to accessibility issues, some patients were using the food pantry, dollar stores, or mobile meals, which didn't accommodate their prescribed dietary needs.

With assistance from the hospital's cardiac educator and dietitians, the Fondy Food Pantry's president was contacted to see how to better accommodate low-income members of the community who need to comply with a diabetic, cardiac, or renal diet. As a result, the group has begun working on creating diet-specific boxes of non-perishable foods, with the provision of fresh produce year-round for patients and community members who utilize the food pantry. Delivery options for how to get the boxes to homebound patients are being explored. Outcomes of such a program are projected to include improved health and quality of life for patients, community benefit and decreased readmissions costs.

In an effort to give back and bolster the initiative, Home Care is working with Marian University nursing students to coordinate healthy food drives involving both the university and the department with an emphasis on how to donate to the food pantry in a healthful, meaningful way.

SSM Health St. Agnes Hospital, a member of Agnesian HealthCare, Fond du Lac

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital Partners with Sheboygan County Food Bank to Increase Access to Healthy Food

In Sheboygan County on any given day, 11,000 residents struggle with hunger. The Sheboygan County Food Bank (SCFB) distributes 66,000 pounds of food monthly to 15 pantries within their network, as well as other organizations that serve people who need food. There is no charge for food, delivery or partner agency network membership. They are dedicated to addressing the food needs of hungry residents and provide healthy and nutritious food to make sure 3,000 families each month don't go hungry. Nutrition, particularly healthy eating and access to healthy foods, continues to be a priority within our community.

As SCFB expanded their network and the demand to serve the community grows, the need for a larger freezer to store food was evident. By adding a freezer, the SCFB is able to store more fresh and healthy foods for their partners, particularly meat which is a highly requested item and essential protein source for clients.



Freezers at the Sheboygan County Food Bank are vital to its ability to serve more people in need.

In response to this need, HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital committed to a three-year partnership providing financial assistance toward the purchase of a freezer and to support the "food to fill the freezer" program. This has been another opportunity for HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital to carry out its mission within the community and help the poor and vulnerable who may not have access to healthy foods without the resources of the Sheboygan County Food Bank.

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

Bridges to Health

Bridges to Health is a community outreach series dedicated to improving the health and wellness of vulnerable populations in Door and Kewaunee counties. The mission of Bridges to Health is to partner with local organizations to provide free and innovative services that collaboratively address community needs. During our first year of existence we created 14 new outreach programs by partnering with 13 community organizations to serve 337 residents across the door peninsula.

Services initiated through Bridges to Health have provided unique programming for children and adults with cognitive, sensory and physical disabilities, seniors in assisted living facilities, adults with chronic conditions and local youth.

Activity and Movement through Play (AMP), partners Bridges to Health with the Boys & Girls Club of Door County and the Door County Sheriff's Department to combat the rise of childhood obesity and physical inactivity. Each month two officers from the Door County Sheriff's Department attend AMP to play and interact with the children. The officer's attendance allows the children to foster positive relationships with local law enforcement and creates the framework of trust.



Immobility, inactivity and the lack of social interaction are key factors associated with poor physical and mental health. Current research shows that assisted living residents are often physically inactive and experience social isolation. Strong and Stable was created to combat physical inactivity and to improve mental health through socialization.

Another outreach program provided through Bridges to Health is the RIDE program, Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities through Exercise. RIDE partners with the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Door County, the Algoma Community Wellness Center, East Shore Industries and the Sunshine House to provide an adaptive exercise program for adults with cognitive disabilities in Kewaunee and Door County to improve muscular strength and to increase aerobic capacity.

As the RIDE program expanded, the need to provide a program for children with disabilities became more and more apparent. RIDE4Kids was created to address this need and to allow children with cognitive, sensory and physical disabilities to have their own recreational program.

Bridges to Health success stories ranging from a gentleman getting out of his house for the first time in six months to a little girl with autism developing a lasting friendship with a student volunteer become normal occurrences. One story that stands out occurred during the RIDE program this past fall. One our participants, who has autism, has struggled with obesity her entire adult life. She had never walked on

a treadmill and was afraid of the machine. Over time with gentle encouragement and constant reassurance we were able to ease her into trying the treadmill. On her first day we had to hold her up with a gait belt as she walked at 0.5 MPH for 30 seconds. Each week she got back on the treadmill and we gradually made steady improvements. She is currently walking on the treadmill all by herself for 20 minutes at 1.5 MPH.

[Door County Medical Center, Sturgeon Bay](#)

Helping Adolescents Make Healthy Choices Through E-Learning Program

In Wisconsin, the rate of teen alcohol or drug dependence exceeds the national rate by 1.3 percent. We know that talking to kids early about these difficult topics can help them become more informed and prepared to make healthy choices.

To help reach kids where they spend much of their time, Children's Wisconsin - Fox Valley Hospital, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, created innovative e-learning programs that allow us to partner with schools to help deliver important health information students need to grow up safe and healthy.

Through a combination of online and classroom activities, It's UR Choice helps students in 4th through 8th grades make smart choices when faced with the pressures of using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and learn how to stay drug-free. The interactive program teaches students age-appropriate facts about drugs and their effects on their body, how to analyze external and peer influences, how to cope in stressful situations and more. It's UR Choice includes a curriculum guide and offers pre- and post-tests to track students' knowledge acquisition.

Josh Neuser, physical/health educator at Lombardi Middle School in Green Bay, shares that the program offers "a great play through learning management system that both teachers and students enjoy."

"The program ties in great with my sixth grade health class drug unit and the program brings great questions and lots of student discourse," says Josh.

It's UR Choice is an important component of reaching kids earlier and preventing alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse.

[Children's Wisconsin-Fox Valley Hospital, Neenah](#)

Working to Fight Addiction in Northeast and Central Wisconsin

ThedaCare serves more than 600,000 people throughout Northeast and Central Wisconsin and has a mission of improving the health of the communities they serve.

ThedaCare leaders and caregivers know it is a responsibility of the organization to understand health issues in those communities. There is also a responsibility to help find solutions to those issues, while continuing to offer the best care possible.

“Opioid dependency is a national crisis, even affecting Northeast and Central Wisconsin communities,” said Dr. Jennifer Frank, Chief Medical Officer of the ThedaCare Clinically Integrated Network. “We want to assist patients so they understand how to use opioids safely and where to find help if necessary.”



Results of the most recent Community Health Needs Assessment conducted by ThedaCare indicate that the opioid epidemic in Wisconsin has grown. Since 2005, the rate of opioid use disorder has more than tripled, according to data provided by the Wisconsin Division of Public Health. This discovery prompted the launch of an internal multi-disciplinary task force to map out how ThedaCare can help fight the trend.

“Drugs impact our communities in a variety of ways,” said Dr. Zach Baeseman, associate medical director of ThedaCare Physicians and Family Medical Physician at ThedaCare Physicians—Waupaca and Wild Rose. “They begin on an individual level and then escalate to involve families and the overall population. Working together to implement solutions will help us make positive changes all around us.”

As part of the strategy outlined by the task force, ThedaCare will be launching an opioid awareness campaign developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “It only takes a little to lose a lot.” The public will see different forms of campaign presence, including billboards, social media and

public service announcements across the nine-county service area. Goals of the campaign include fewer prescriptions written for opioids, more people accessing addiction and recovery services and ultimately lower rates of hospitalizations, emergency department visits and deaths due to opioid overdose.

Other key components of the campaign include academic detailing, increasing Medically Assisted Treatment, implementing and supporting school-based resiliency programming such as Sources of Strength and installing drug drop boxes at ThedaCare locations.

“For us, this is very personal,” said Dr. Frank. “This is our community, and we want it to be a safe and healthy community. This is the community we all live in and may want to stay in forever, so we want it to be the best community possible.”

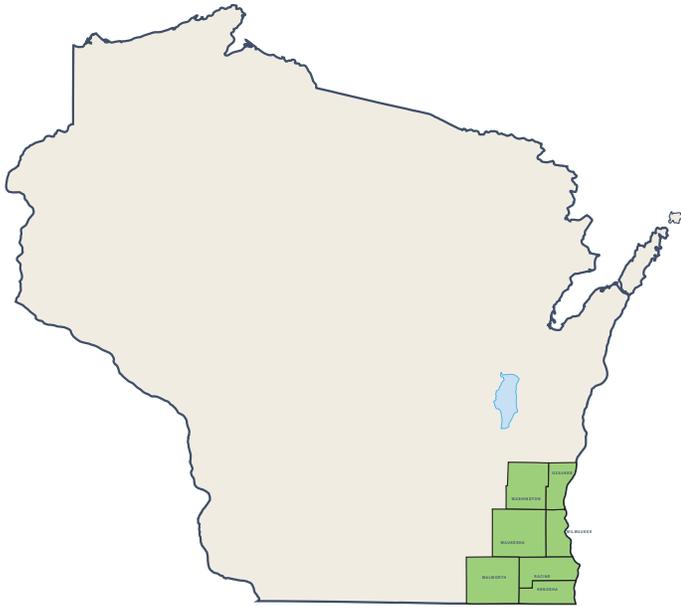
ThedaCare also asks community members to be involved in finding a solution to the opioid crisis. ThedaCare encourages patients and families to ask providers about whether alternatives to opiates should be considered. And, if prescribed an opioid, take and dispose of medications properly. Unused prescription medications in homes can cause concern, because they can be accidentally ingested, stolen and abused. Unused or expired medicine should never be flushed or poured down the drain. Medicine take-back options are the best way to safely dispose of most types of medicines.

The organization will also connect people to resources like the Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline through 2-1-1, ThedaCare Behavioral Health and other valuable services. A list of services and contact information can be found by visiting the [ThedaCare opioid resource page](#).

“We must do this together,” said Dr. Baeseman. “To help end this epidemic, everyone must be working toward the common goal of saving lives.”

ThedaCare, Appleton

Southeastern Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:
\$897,904,506**

A Helping Hand to Limit the Delay of Care

Sadly, through our hospital’s community health needs survey, we know there are times when individuals with limited resources will delay seeking medical care because they don’t have coverage and cannot afford to pay for a visit to see a doctor. Many times, delaying care can lead to a more serious situation, which may result in an emergency or the need for more serious medical interventions.

This is exactly what happened to Grace. She went to the emergency department when she couldn’t stand the pain she was experiencing any longer and was immediately hospitalized following a medical assessment.

Thankfully, when our financial advocate completed a financial review with Grace, she was able to determine that Grace was eligible for a 100% discount through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program.

When Grace received news of her approval, she began to sob.

“I’ve been so stressed out over what this hospital stay was going to cost me. I can’t believe the hospital will just take care of it for me – I am extremely grateful that I can just focus on getting better instead of worrying about the bills.”

Aurora Medical Center in Grafton

Mom Finds Sobriety with Financial Help for Treatment

Kate found her life spiraling out of control. As a new mom, she had suffered extreme post-partum depression and became dependent on alcohol.

At the worst point, Kate says she was drinking from sun up to sundown. After hitting bottom, she sought inpatient care at Rogers Behavioral Health and the Herrington Center for Addiction Recovery.

But addiction to alcohol wasn’t Kate’s only challenge. Within two weeks, she learned insurance benefits were ending.

“My heart sank when I sat in the meeting, but they informed me that because of my hard work and drive, I was awarded a scholarship. I started crying and I looked at my therapist and she was too. I knew I was in the right place at the time and this was just the beginning of my life,” Kate shares.

“Herrington saved my life. Starting with the staff, the medical professionals, large group activities, individual and small group sessions, family interventions, letters from family, AA meetings, yoga at sunrise, and learning to meditate, but most importantly, I learned the root cause of my addiction, how to treat it, and a plan that has kept me healthy and sober almost three years now.”



Kate is healthy and sober.

Kate believes she would not be sober today without that funding.

“I was given a full opportunity to change my life around, and for that I will forever be grateful.”

Last year, Rogers provided nearly \$6 million in patient care grants and charity care.

Rogers Behavioral Health, Oconomowoc

Support to Fill in the Gap

Bradley was recently admitted to the emergency department at Aurora Medical Center in Burlington. He is a single man with diabetes who recently lost his BadgerCare coverage when his income increased due to working overtime. He was very concerned about how he was going to pay for his services; however, he felt he had no choice but to seek emergency assistance when he began experiencing new symptoms of light-headedness upon standing and an increased heart rate.

Diabetes can be difficult for many patients to manage on their own. Without proper management, an elevated level of blood glucose for a long period can cause irreversible damage to nerves causing diabetic neuropathy, which is the most common complication of diabetes. This is what was causing Bradley's new symptoms.

While receiving care in the hospital, Bradley asked to speak with a financial advocate. He was very relieved to learn about the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program for patients who meet the requirements. Bradley completed the Aurora Helping Hand application right away and provided the required documentation. He was approved for a 100% discount on his hospital expenses and will be eligible for coverage until his BadgerCare benefits start again.

When he received his approval in the mail, he called the financial advocate immediately to express his gratitude for the excellent service he received at our hospital.

Aurora Medical Center in Burlington

Mammograms on Wheels

Ana* had discovered a lump on her breast during a self-exam. Having recently lost her job, she didn't have insurance and was concerned she wouldn't be able to afford a mammogram or treatment if the lump was cancerous.

A friend told Ana to come with her to Thiensville's Farmers Market where she had seen Ascension Wisconsin's Mobile Mammography coach.



Ascension Wisconsin's mobile mammography coach brings care to women in need throughout Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties.

The only mobile service of its kind in Wisconsin, the coach travels throughout greater Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties to provide 3D mammograms to people in need. It eliminates barriers to screening, among them transportation and anxiety about the screening itself. Outreach care coordinators, like Jane, identify women in need, see that they receive screening and work with community partners to host events with the truck.

Jane was working the day Ana and her friend visited the Thiensville Farmer's Market.

"I was able to help Ana apply for financial assistance through the Wisconsin Breast Cancer Assistance Fund," said Jane. "Once she was approved, we worked with her physician to set up a diagnostic mammogram at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Ozaukee."

Thankfully, Ana's mammogram results were benign, but she was very grateful for Jane's assistance and support.

Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Ozaukee, Mequon

A Helping Hand for a Strong Man

Hank and Dottie were high school sweethearts. They grew up in Milwaukee's South Shore area, married shortly after high school, and raised their family in the same neighborhood where they grew up.

Dottie was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis a few years ago. Because he is not yet able to retire, Hank has been caring for her while still working full-time.

Recently, Hank began experiencing trouble breathing and arrived in our emergency department, where he was diagnosed with heart failure. His biggest concern in that moment: having a large medical bill to pay. Hank was already visiting the hospital monthly to pay medical bills for his wife and was worried about adding to that expense. He was considering refusing treatment.

That's when our hospital's financial advocate stepped in.

She informed Hank that with the information he provided, she believed he would be eligible for Aurora's Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. She helped him fill out the application, for which he was approved.

Hank stayed and received the medical interventions he required to get better. Following treatment and recovery, he returned home to continue caring for his wife.

Hank stops in now and then to visit the financial advocate. When their visit ends and Hank heads for the door, he always stops and says, "If you ever need help with anything, just give me a call."

Aurora St. Luke's South Shore, Milwaukee



Linda Smith, APNP with Lyle Ubersox

Financial Assistance Program Helps Local Truck Driver with Unexpected Medical Expenses

Lyle Ubersox, a self-employed truck driver, was referred to the Community Outreach Health Clinic (COHC) at Froedtert Memomonee Falls Hospital after being treated for several blood clots in his lungs. He was prescribed Coumadin®, an anticoagulant used to treat and prevent blood clots, which was monitored by Linda Smith, COHC nurse practitioner.

As part of Lyle's follow-up treatment, his blood pressure and cholesterol levels were checked, resulting in a recommendation for a stress test that measured how his heart was working during physical activity. The test revealed problems with blood flow in his heart, and after meeting with cardiologist Sarah Thordsen, MD, he was immediately admitted to Froedtert Memomonee Falls Hospital for heart bypass surgery.

Lyle had applied for assistance through the Froedtert Health Financial Assistance Program and was relieved and grateful to find out the day before his surgery that he was accepted. All of his bills would be paid — including those from the treatment of his blood clots. The Froedtert Health Financial Assistance Program is designed to assist patients who are unable to pay their hospital bills. Patients who qualify for the program will receive care with no obligation or discounted obligation to pay for services.

"It was a huge relief," Lyle said. "I don't have insurance, and I was stressed because I knew if I didn't get help, I would have to file bankruptcy."

Lyle's bypass surgery went well, and he is thankful for the exceptional care he received.

"I couldn't have asked for better care, everything was all up front, there were no surprises," he said. "Everyone who came in my room and talked to me was great — they treated me the same as everyone else."

Lyle now goes to cardiac rehabilitation three days a week at Froedtert & MCW North Hills Health Center. He is feeling much better but still has not been able to return to work. He hopes to be cleared to go back soon. "The financial assistance program took a lot of the pressure off since I have had to be out of work for so long," Lyle said. "I am very, very grateful for it."

Froedtert Menomonee Falls Hospital

When You Just Need a Safe Place to Heal

The transition from adolescence into adulthood can be difficult for many people. Ashley had Medicaid coverage but when she turned 19, she was no longer covered because she was over income while working as a home health provider.

Unfortunately, Ashley lost her job when her client required an inpatient hospital stay and rehabilitation. Now she was left without insurance and without an income.

Ashley had been managing some behavioral health issues well while she was working but was unable to afford her prescriptions. After many days without her medication, she began experiencing some worrisome symptoms that pushed her to admit herself to the Aurora Psychiatric Hospital to get herself back on her medication and stabilized.

After she began feeling more like herself, Ashley visited the hospital's financial advocate to discuss her payment options. She explained her situation and the advocate was able to determine that Ashley was eligible for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program to cover the expenses related to her hospital stay. The advocate was also able to complete a BadgerCare application so Ashley would have access to her much-needed medications following her discharge.

Ashley is now able to access her medication on her own and back at work with a new client.

Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa

A Helping Hand for a Stroke Survivor

Jeremy arrived in the emergency department of the Aurora Medical Center in Summit after experiencing a severe stroke. The ED visit resulted in an inpatient admission to the hospital, followed by a long stay in inpatient rehabilitation.

It was clear that the damage caused by the stroke left Jeremy unable to work, so his Power of Attorney (POA) contacted the financial advocate for help. The financial advocate was able to guide Jeremy and his chosen POA through the Medicaid and Social Security Disability (SSD) processes, and he did receive approval for benefits.

Unfortunately, his Medicaid and SSD benefits did not begin immediately and would not cover the expenses already incurred for the care he already received. Jeremy was a hospital inpatient for over a month before his new benefits would begin.

Aware of this financial dilemma, the financial advocate also guided Jeremy and his POA through an application for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. Jeremy was approved and received a 100% discount on his hospital bills.

Being relieved of the financial stresses associated with his stroke, Jeremy can now focus on his rehabilitation and is learning to navigate life as a stroke survivor.

Aurora Medical Center Summit

A Helping Hand from a Friend

Our financial advocates support our mission to help people live well by building meaningful relationships with the patients they interact with every day.

One such relationship exists between Claudia, a patient who has been approved for Aurora's Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program, and Claire, our hospital's financial advocate.

Claudia is an elderly woman who is managing multiple chronic health issues. She visits the hospital clinic monthly to receive much-needed medical care. When Claudia is on the clinic's schedule, she is added to Claire's schedule to receive a financial review to re-check her eligibility for financial support programs.

Claudia is a Spanish-speaking individual so there is always an interpreter on the phone, ready to support her each time she enters the clinic exam room. The interpreter supports Claudia during her visit with the medical staff and then with Claire.

Each time Claire sees Claudia, she is greeted with a big hug. Claire can speak a little Spanish and can comprehend it while it's being spoken even more, so a lot of times she is able to speak with Claudia directly, relying on the interpreter only to check comprehension. This adds to Claudia's comfort level.

When they complete their financial review, Claudia always gives Claire another big hug on the way out.

Claudia and Claire are both hoping that Claudia's condition and financial situation improve so she no longer requires Aurora Helping Hand assistance. However, when that day finally comes, both admit they will miss their monthly visits together.

Aurora West Allis Medical Center

Help in the Knick of Time

Sometimes patients come to us because they have no other place to go and have a medical need that cannot wait. Such was the case for Angelina.

After being assessed by the medical team in our emergency department, it was determined that Angelina required a surgical intervention. Being undocumented and living on a limited income, Angelina and her husband were worried about how they would pay for her care – so worried they even considered leaving the hospital without scheduling her procedure.

Thankfully, our financial advocate was able to meet with Angelina and started to complete a financial assessment. The advocate asked Angelina's husband to gather some specific documents and submit them with the completed application.

Unfortunately, when the husband sent in the completed application and some of the necessary supporting documents, they were forwarded to another financial assistance office at a different location. Unaware of the time sensitivity with that application, that financial assistance office sent a letter to the husband letting him know they received the application but were still in need of additional documentation, which would delay Angelina's approval and her surgery.

Our hospital's financial advocate was able to intervene and retrieve the application, work with the husband to gather the additional documents and get Angelina approved for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. The approval allowed Angelina to keep her procedure on schedule and it was covered 100%.

Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn

Financial Support Helps Patient Beat OCD

When Ryan began treatment at Rogers Behavioral Health for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and anxiety, he was experiencing severe symptoms with a significant negative impact on his quality of life.



Ryan is rising above OCD

Ryan's insurance benefits did not cover the dose of care he required, and Rogers provided financial support to extend his treatment.

"I came into this program washing my hands 40 to 50 times a day. Just last night, I only had one handwash!... If my days wouldn't have been extended, I would not

be where I am today. Your kind gesture of giving me a grant allowed me to work harder on my OCD and anxiety for a longer period of time... I was able to get to this point because of the foundation. Without it, my progress would have certainly slowed down. So from the bottom of my heart, I thank you. You have no idea how much this meant to me."

Staying in treatment at Rogers allowed Ryan to reduce his symptoms and rise above the challenges of OCD. "I am forever grateful for this program, because it has truly changed my life."

Last year, Rogers provided nearly \$6 million in patient care grants and charity care.

Rogers Behavioral Health, Oconomowoc

A Helping Hand When You are Stuck Somewhere in the Middle

In addition to working full-time, Angela, a young, single mother, is the sole provider for her child and often helps her mother with the little funds she has left after paying for her own living expenses.

Being recently promoted to a new role put Angela's income just slightly over the income limits to be approved for state benefits – something Angela knew she would have to address. Unfortunately, her new role also meant a busier schedule. So busy, in fact, that she inadvertently missed her employer's open enrollment deadline. When Angela tried working with her employer for an application extension, she was told that she must wait until the next enrollment period.

Then it happened: Angela experienced an accident that ended with her in the emergency department (ED).

Worried about how her ED visit would impact her family financially, Angela reached out to the hospital's financial advocate for help. The advocate reviewed Angela's paperwork and was able to approve her for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program, which would cover 100% of her ED visit.

When the advocate delivered the good news, Angela responded:

"You don't know what that means to me!" She said, "I've been working so hard to support my family on my own. I was terrified that this one mistake was going to set us back. Thanks to this program, I can stay focused on improving our future!"

Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

A Helping Hand for a Hard-working Family

George is a family man. He and his wife have been married for 23 years and are raising three children together.

Five years ago, George's health began to deteriorate. In the last year, his symptoms became so severe that he lost his job due to his inability to function successfully in his role. He's been working here and there in temporary positions but has been unable to retain full-time employment due to his illnesses, leaving him ineligible for insurance through his employers. To avoid building large amounts of medical bills, George refrained from seeking treatment. Unfortunately, George's symptoms became so severe that he required an emergency hospital admission to save his life.

To help support the family financially, George's wife works part-time in between homeschooling their children. Two of their children also have part-time jobs. Although their group effort to

cover their family finances has allowed them to remain mostly current on their basic living expenses, they had little extra.

When George was admitted to the hospital, our financial advocate met with him and his wife. The advocate was able to work with them to attain coverage for the whole family through BadgerCare. He was also able to approve them to receive a 100% discount on George's hospital stay through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program.

The approval for both programs has allowed the whole family to focus on improving George's health without worrying about how they would access the care he needs.

[Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee](#)

An Opportunity for a New Beginning

Chronic disease and destitution can be a dangerous combination. A man arrived in our emergency department suffering from severe symptoms related to his chronic disease. He informed the financial advocate that he needed help but was destitute and unable to afford medical bills as he was unemployed, and his wife was only able to work part-time as she helped take care of him.

After the nurses and physicians confirmed the man needed to be admitted, the financial advocate met with him again to discuss financial options. During their time together, she explained the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program and helped him apply. After he submitted his application and supporting documents, the financial advocate was able to inform him that he was approved for a 100% discount that would cover his continued medical expenses at the facility through the following year. The man cried tears of joy at the wonderful news.

When the financial counselor conducted an updated assessment with the man six months later, he and his wife expressed their continued appreciation for her and the Aurora Helping Hand program. They also informed the counselor that because of the medical care he continued to receive, they have been able to begin building a new life: The wife is now able to work more hours in her part-time position now that the man's health is improving.

[Aurora Medical Center in Kenosha](#)

Support for a Whole Family

Being a single parent is not an easy task. Not having a partner to share in the day-to-day care responsibilities of your children or to help with the expenses that come with raising a family can be difficult to navigate.

Erica, a single mother of two, fell ill and required an inpatient stay at Aurora Medical Center in Summit. While in the hospital, she not only was concerned about the care of her children while she was away, she was concerned about what the impact of her medical bills would be on her family as she was uninsured.

Erica met with the hospital's financial advocate and asked if there were any programs that could help her. The financial advocate completed a financial assessment with Erica and determined that she would be eligible for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. The advocate was also able to help Erica enroll her children for benefits through BadgerCare.

"I cannot thank you enough for what you've done for my family. Not only have you helped me take care of my medical bills, but my kids can now visit their doctor too!"

[Aurora Medical Center Summit](#)

Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Treatment Changes Rogers Patient's Life

Emily had tried to address her troubles with substance use through detox and an outpatient program for addiction. But addiction wasn't the only reason Emily needed help. In reality, she was desperate for relief from both alcoholism and anxiety. Then she found a program at Rogers Behavioral Health in West Allis that treated patients with co-occurring diagnoses.

"I had no coping skills to combat my anxiety beyond alcohol, and I was immersed in a horrible cycle of blackout drunk binges. Prior to this treatment, I'd never addressed both issues at the same time. Doing so was crucial to my recovery."

In treatment, Emily participated in Alcoholics Anonymous and group therapy, was referred to a long-term counselor, and had her medication re-evaluated. She gradually found that she no longer craved the immediate relief of alcohol.

Halfway through the program, Emily received devastating news: her insurance would not cover the costs of treatment. With a child, a mortgage, and other financial responsibilities, she knew that paying out of pocket wasn't possible.

With financial support from the Rogers Behavioral Health Foundation, Emily continued receiving the treatment she needed.

"Truly, my life was saved when I got sober, and I wouldn't have had that opportunity if I wasn't able to continue treatment. Being physically and mentally addicted, I knew I required professional help. I am forever grateful."

Last year, Rogers provided nearly \$6 million in patient care grants and charity care.

[Rogers Behavioral Health, West Allis](#)

Medical Mission at Home Brings Free Health Care Services to Racine

More than 400 volunteers provided free medical care and social services to 279 people in need and dental services to 118 at Ascension Wisconsin's Medical Mission at Home on Saturday, May 11, at Park High School in Racine.

The term "medical mission" often refers to volunteer caregivers who travel to other countries to provide medical services. The Medical Mission at Home did the same thing for neighbors in need in the Racine community.

"We provided health care to a really important population who either don't have health insurance or who are underinsured here in the greater Racine area. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who don't have access to primary care, which is critical to good health and well-being," said Kristin McManmon, president, Ascension All Saints Hospital.



Ascension's Medical Mission at Home is part of its commitment to health care that leaves no one behind.

The Medical Mission at Home included medical evaluations, laboratory testing, X-rays, mammograms, ultrasound, medications, podiatry screenings and spiritual services, among other services.

One patient who waited for several hours in line before the medical mission started, was there to see a dentist to extract an infected tooth he couldn't afford to have treated. He said the best part of the day was feeling the love from all the volunteers and being surrounded by kindness.

The Medical Mission at Home is part of Ascension Wisconsin's commitment to reach individuals who are uninsured, underinsured and need access to health care services. Ascension's Medical Mission at Home connects those who struggle with access to providers, follow-up care and other resources to help them stay healthy and manage their medical conditions so they can live their best lives.

[Ascension All Saints Hospital, Racine](#)

Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers Behavioral Health Expansion

Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center has been a long-time partner of Sixteenth Street Community Health Center (SSCHC), a federally qualified health center in Milwaukee that serves low-income patients. As part of the expanded Aurora Better Together Fund contributions that Aurora announced in May 2016, our hospital donated a property located at 4570 S. 27th St., which was the site of a former Aurora pain care center.

In an effort to expand access to primary care and behavioral health services in Milwaukee, SSCHC converted the space to a primary care and behavioral health clinic.

The clinic, which opened its doors in early 2018, staffs approximately 25 full- and part-time employees including physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists and medical assistants. The clinic provides services to both adults and children in English and Spanish.

One unique program the clinic offers includes an intensive therapy program designed for children and adolescents who are struggling in school or at home and who need more intensive treatment than seeing a therapist once a week. The program is able to accommodate 16 students in the morning and 16 students in the afternoon, five days per week.

Our hospital continues to support SSCHC's work through referrals, in-kind and financial contributions.

[Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee](#)

Providing Health Care to the Medically Underserved in Our Communities

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women, with medically underserved communities suffering disproportionately from the disease compared with other populations. Committed to reaching at-risk women, the Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) health network and Progressive Community Health Centers co-hosted a screening mammography and health event at Progressive's Lisbon Avenue location in Milwaukee.

The event attracted more than 300 community members for a day of pampering, entertainment and education. Thirty-five women had mammograms and of those women, 23 had normal findings, 10 had abnormal findings and two needed comparative information from previous mammograms. Progressive staff worked with the women to schedule appropriate follow up.



The screening mammography and health event at Progressive's Lisbon Avenue location in Milwaukee

- Community and social service programs – Blanket of Love (prenatal and parenting education program), Hunger Taskforce Stockbox for seniors, Next Door - early childhood education and family support services, and health insurance enrollment
- Job fair – Ascension Wisconsin, Employ Milwaukee
- Health education workshops – Healthy eating with diabetes and exercise classes including chair yoga

In addition to the Fall Festival, Ascension St. Joseph hosted a Milwaukee Enrollment Network open enrollment event for the community to meet with health insurance experts, learn about new insurance options in the Health Insurance Marketplace and sign up for coverage.

Ascension SE Wisconsin Hospital – St. Joseph Campus, Milwaukee

Refugee Health Coordination with Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. Refugees come to the United States through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which refers them to the U.S. Department of State and Department of Health Services.

Once approved, refugees are provided medical insurance and required to receive a health screening within 90 days of being relocated into a new city.

In 2015, Aurora Family Service entered into a contract with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families to provide the coordination of refugee health screenings and primary medical care. Aurora Family Service works in partnership with our hospital and medical group and Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic to provide screenings and care.

In 2018, 290 Milwaukee County refugees were served through our Refugee Health Coordination Program.

- 100 were referred to Aurora Family Service.
- 183 received health screenings by Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic.
- 7 received screenings by an Aurora Health Care Medical Group provider.

In cases where we could help these individuals establish a health home, we provided appropriate referrals. As a result, 75% of the individuals who received screenings were able to establish a health home with an Aurora provider.

Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

The event offered engaging and informative opportunities for women to take charge of their breast health. While a screening was the desired goal for attendees, even those reluctant to have a mammogram had the chance to ask questions and explore strategies for taking better care of themselves.

Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin - Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

Fall Festival - A Healthy Celebration

Ascension St. Joseph hosted a Fall Festival in November which celebrated health by providing healthy activities for all ages including games, snacks, prizes, health screenings, flu shots, a job fair, health insurance enrollment, cooking and dance classes and more.

The event was free and inspired residents to take charge of their health. Ascension St. Joseph is a great example of including the entire community in re-shaping the campus to better address the health needs of the surrounding neighborhoods.

"There's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach to keeping people healthy. We are committed to reducing disparities when it comes to prevention, detection and treatment of disease," said Reggie Newson, chief advocacy officer of Ascension Wisconsin.

The event included:

- Health screenings – Blood pressure, glucose and diabetes risk tests, breast health/early detection and flu shots
- Health and wellness topics – Breast health/early detection, oral health, heart health and nutrition

Spanish-Speaking Cancer Clinic

Milwaukee is home to many diverse communities and our hospital resides within an area that is surrounded by a large Hispanic population. According to a report released by the Wisconsin Policy Forum in May 2019, since 2000, the Hispanic population has grown by over 75,000 in the Milwaukee metro area, accounting for all the region's net growth.

This growth also includes a population for whom English is not their primary language, which can create barriers to health – something that can be especially difficult to manage when one is diagnosed with a serious condition, such as cancer or a blood disease. To better connect with this growing population, our hospital not only continues to offer a bi-lingual staff, interpreters, and Spanish-language material, but we also opened the Aurora Cancer Care Spanish Clinic.

The Spanish Clinic is open every Monday. Under the direction of Federico Sanchez, MD, a board-certified specialist in oncology/hematology, the clinic's bilingual staff helps Spanish-speaking patients navigate and coordinate every aspect of their care, while also meeting the language and cultural needs of the patient and their family.



Federico Sanchez, MD visiting a Spanish-Speaking Cancer Clinic patient.

At the Spanish Cancer Clinic, patients are greeted in Spanish, asked about their health in Spanish, and given outcomes and treatment options in Spanish. Being able to communicate with their care team in Spanish, their primary language, gives them a stronger understanding of their diagnosis and allows them to make more informed decisions about their treatment options.

In 2018, 24 Spanish-speaking individuals were treated through 69 visits.

[Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee](#)

Stop the Bleed

A person who is bleeding can die from blood loss within five minutes; therefore, it is important to quickly stop the blood loss. No matter how rapid the arrival of professional emergency responders, bystanders will always be first on the scene and those nearest to someone with life-threatening injuries are best positioned to provide first care.

Stop the Bleed is a national awareness campaign and call-to-action that encourages bystanders to become trained, equipped, and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives.

Our hospital's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) office organized a Stop the Bleed event in Ozaukee County in partnership with the Ozaukee County Sheriff's office as well as the Cedarburg Police Department. In addition, it has been a focus of the Southeast Regional Trauma Advisory Committee (SERTAC).

We invited many community stakeholders including school teachers and staff, business owners, community groups, law enforcement and county employees. Participating organizations were able to purchase Stop the Bleed kits at a discounted rate to keep at their site.

Since we started offering the program several years ago, we have trained well over 2,500 community members.

[Aurora Medical Center in Grafton](#)

Identifying Environmental Triggers to Help Improve Health for Kids with Asthma

Asthma affects approximately 10 percent of kids in Wisconsin and is the most common reason for preventable pediatric hospitalization and emergency department visits. Importantly, the burden of asthma is not shared equally – kids, certain ethnic groups, and those living in certain geographic regions are disproportionately impacted by asthma. Children with asthma can live healthy, active lives if they have the support they need to manage their disease, avoid their triggers and use their medications as directed.

The Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin (the Alliance) provides education, resources and tools to support asthma awareness and reduce the burden of asthma in Wisconsin. With funding assistance from the State of Wisconsin and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the Alliance implements evidence-based asthma programs, services and advocacy, including coordination of the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition. The Alliance also offers a no-cost child care, school and home walkthrough program to identify and reduce environmental triggers with the goal to decrease asthma symptoms.

“The Walkthrough Program has provided Kenosha Unified School District (KUSD) and the Kenosha County Division of Health with documentation of asthma triggers in classrooms and common areas of each KUSD school, which helps school staff and nurses easily identify triggers and take appropriate measures, if needed,” says Lindsay Deinhammer, school nurse and asthma educator at the Kenosha County Health Department.

Through integrated care coordination among families, clinicians, school nurses and community partners, the Alliance helps improve systems and empowers our community to help kids with asthma lead better lives.

Children’s Wisconsin-Milwaukee Hospital

Ascension Elmbrook Supports New Moms



Courtney Thompson breastfeeds her baby, Everly, at the Baby Connection breastfeeding support group at Ascension Elmbrook in Brookfield.

Ascension Elmbrook caregivers educate new and expectant mothers about the importance of breastfeeding through Baby Connection, a free, weekly, new parent support group that helps breastfeeding moms and babies.

“We saw there was a need in the community to provide support after moms left the hospital, to help them with breastfeeding questions, get help if needed, and connect them with other moms who also have new babies,” said Lactation Consultant Dana Robbins, who leads the group sessions.

The Baby Connection support group is one of the reasons Ascension Elmbrook in Brookfield is internationally recognized as a Baby-Friendly Designated birth facility, one of only 12 in the state to earn this status.

This designation is a hospital quality improvement and accreditation program that evaluates maternity care practices for their support of optimal infant nutrition and mother/baby bonding. It’s a project of the World Health Organization and UNICEF and is implemented in the United States by Baby-Friendly USA. The program is based on the 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.

The designation means the hospital has been recognized for its work to offer breastfeeding mothers information so they have the skills needed to feed their new babies.

Baby Connection began in 2004 as a way for mothers to learn and support each other in a comfortable environment.

- Led by a lactation consultant
- Parenting topics discussed weekly
- Baby weigh-ins available

“It’s just a great place to come and get support for problems we’re having, share successes, and meet other new moms,” said Tonya Stanly, a mother who attends the group at Ascension Elmbrook.

Ascension SE Wisconsin Hospital - Elmbrook Campus, Brookfield

Caring for Our Aging Neighbors

The communities surrounding Aurora St. Luke’s South Shore hospital are aging. While Milwaukee County’s median age is 34.0 years, South Shore residents have higher median ages at 40.6 years for Cudahy, 37.0 years for Oak Creek, 45.0 years for St. Francis, and 40.5 years for South Milwaukee.

As people grow older, their risk for falls increase due to normal, age-related physical changes and medical conditions. Of adults aged 65 years or older, one-third experience a fall each year. A fall can cause a serious health problem or other devastating consequences, so limiting risk is critical for all aging adults.

Thankfully, falls are preventable.

To address this safety concern in our community during 2018, our hospital focused on two initiatives:

First, 100% of our emergency department patients aged 65 years and older are identified for screening with the Identification of Seniors at Risk (ISAR) tool. Of those screened, individuals who scored a 4 were referred to social services for additional assistance.

Secondly, we armed our community with education. Our hospital conducted two Stepping On falls prevention programs for 16 participants. During this program, attendees learned how to build and maintain the physical strength they need to walk confidently, identified risks they may face in their own lives and created action plans to help them reduce their fall risk.

Aurora St. Luke’s South Shore, Milwaukee

Helping Parents Recognize Drug and Alcohol Hiding Places

Ascension SE Wisconsin Hospital – Franklin Campus hosted its eighth annual Ascension Franklin Family Health Night in June for the community. Hundreds of participants got to meet first responders and get up close to a display of fire trucks and police cars, see Flight for Life in action, hear the heartbeat of a simulated patient, enjoy a “Teddy Bear Clinic” and learn about important health topics while meeting new physicians and hospital staff.

New this year, thanks to a local Boy Scout, parents also learned where adolescents and teens may hide drugs and alcohol at home. In partnership with the Oak Creek Health Department, 16-year old Joe Schissler developed a mobile unit to help parents identify the best hiding places for drugs and alcohol.

Parents walked through the “Wake Up” trailer and learned what warning signs to be on the lookout for and how innovative teens can be when it comes to hiding evidence of substance abuse.

Teen drug use is a challenge faced by many in Milwaukee County. Ascension recognizes Joe for his creativity and shining a light on this important health issue.

[Ascension SE Wisconsin Hospital – Franklin Campus](#)

Keeping our Babies Safe



Although many families may prefer to leave infants and children with an adult family member when they require help with childcare, it’s not an option for every family. Leaving a child with a responsible older sibling or a babysitter is a great option when those young people are properly prepared.

Raising awareness around infant and child health and safety is important for preventing illness and unintentional injury. To help train young people to be safe, professional and reliable sitters, our hospital offers a babysitting workshop. The workshop equips youth who are planning to babysit with the knowledge and skills necessary to safely and responsibly care for children and infants.

Participants learn and practice:

- Basics of Babysitting
- American Heart Association Family and Friends CPR (hands-on learning)
- Safety and Emergency Preparedness
- Stages of Child Development

Our hospital conducted two Babysitting Basics classes in 2018 for 31 participants age nine and older. Following completion of the class, 100% of the attendees demonstrated knowledge gained between pre- and post-tests.

[Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn](#)

Walk with a Doc

Chronic disease, long-lasting conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer can result in health complications, compromised quality of life and burgeoning health care costs. As the most common and preventable of all health issues, chronic diseases account for 86% of health care costs.

To help expand community member knowledge about chronic disease and encourage movement, our hospital joined the Walk with a Doc movement. Walk with a Doc aims to make hope and health accessible to all through doctor-led walking groups. The goal is to offer a safe, fun, and free place for community members to get some steps while learning about health topics.

Our hospital’s group meets at Burlington High School on the 3rd Saturday of every month. Every month features a different physician speaking on a different health topic. We’ve discussed a wide variety of topics, including: Why Immunize?, How our Mind Impacts our Bodies, and How to Reduce Your Cardiovascular Risk. These walks also create an opportunity for participants to ask a provider health questions, something that isn’t always easily accessible outside of a hospital or clinic.

So far in 2019, our walks average 17 participants each month.

[Aurora Medical Center in Burlington](#)

Health Compass Milwaukee: An Online Resource for Community Health Planning



Through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership, Milwaukee's four health systems have collaborated on community health needs

assessments (CHNAs) since 2012. And in that time, interest in CHNA findings, community health improvement and the social determinants of health has grown well beyond hospital walls. Enter healthcompassmilwaukee.org.

In response to hospitals' and the community's desire for greater access to public and population health information, the health systems - Advocate Aurora Health, Ascension Wisconsin, Children's Wisconsin and Froedtert Health - worked together to find a web-based tool that would serve as a comprehensive source of health-related data about Milwaukee County residents and communities.

Launched in 2019, Health Compass Milwaukee is a dynamic website that provides more than 260 continuously updated health indicators gathered from a variety of sources, including the WHA Information Center. Indicators are available at county, state, municipal, zip code and census tract levels, and related demographic data such as race/ethnicity, education, income, and housing are available as well.

Health Compass is an interactive website that gives users the ability to create maps and reports about specific locations and specific health indicators. Its comparative analytic tools help support research and planning for health care, public health, academic, philanthropic, government and community-based organizations.

With more than 2,500 users since its launch, Health Compass Milwaukee, sponsored by Milwaukee's health systems, is a valuable resource for community-wide health improvement.

Milwaukee Health Care Partnership

Coverage to Care in Kenosha

Emergency department (ED) high utilizers are typically people of modest means and poor health who frequent the ED, often to address symptoms of a chronic health condition, while rarely addressing any underlying health issues.

High utilizers often experience barriers to access health care. Sometimes the barrier they experience is an inability to navigate the health care system.

Coverage to Care (C2C) is an intensive case management initiative managed by Aurora Family Service to provide guidance and self-advocacy coaching to at-risk patients

significantly impacted by their environment, social conditions and other factors beyond their control.

This model places social service navigators in EDs to provide patients with knowledge and tools to manage their health care effectively and establish a meaningful relationship with a primary care provider.

In the second quarter of 2018, our hospital introduced the C2C program in our ED. The program served 63 individuals, connecting them to resources that address social and environmental issues impacting their health and increasing access to medical care. The C2C social worker also educates patients on the health care system and helps them take a proactive approach to their well-being.

Once these patients successfully navigate the health care system for six months with the help of the social worker, they transition out of the program with knowledge of how to appropriately and cost effectively manage their own care.

Aurora Medical Center in Kenosha

Investing in Workforce Development through Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a workforce and career development initiative led by Easter Seals Southeast Wisconsin. Froedtert West Bend Hospital celebrated its first Project SEARCH graduates this year as seven interns completed the program.

Project SEARCH interns receive classroom and job skill development through three 10- to 12-week rotations from September through May. Interns work at the hospital in areas including the Ambulatory Surgery Unit, Emergency Department and Intensive Care Unit, Environmental Services, Food and Nutrition Services, Nursing Administration and Pharmacy. The goal of the program is for

interns to develop skills that lead to employment, either at the job site or elsewhere. Interns work four to five hours a day and contribute to department productivity by helping with a variety of activities including clerical, organizing, cleaning, technical and customer service tasks.



Sarah B. Project SEARCH graduate now an employee of Froedtert West Bend Hospital's Supply Distribution Department

“These kinds of activities may seem insignificant when you consider the seriousness of the patient care we provide every day, but I assure you the patient care couldn’t take place without the support services our staff and Project SEARCH interns take care of behind the scenes,” said Allen Ericson, president of St. Joseph’s Hospital.

While this was the first year Froedtert West Bend Hospital participated in the program, Froedtert & MCW Froedtert Hospital began working with Project SEARCH interns in 2015.

Froedtert West Bend Hospital

Health That Goes Beyond Health Care

More than a decade ago, Brenda Buchanan, RN, community outreach nurse with Ascension Wisconsin, started working with St. Catherine Residence on Milwaukee’s lower east side. At the time, Brenda was a nurse with Ascension Columbia St. Mary’s Hospital Milwaukee and would provide annual flu shots, health screenings and health education to the residents.

Today, the collaboration between the two organizations has grown significantly. Ascension Wisconsin hosts monthly educational series, annual health fairs, and regular diabetes and hypertension screenings.

When Maria* was a resident at St. Catherine’s she participated in several of the monthly education sessions and visited Brenda weekly for her blood pressure screenings. During her stay at St. Catherine’s, Brenda helped Maria address questions about her personal health journey and connected her to community resources where she could receive additional follow-up care.

One week after Maria moved out of St. Catherine’s, Ascension Wisconsin’s Mobile Mammography Coach was on site to provide free and low-cost screening mammograms to the residents. Brenda encouraged Maria to return to St. Catherine’s for a mammogram. She was hesitant, but trusted Brenda and knew the coach would be a welcoming, private space. The results of her mammogram were positive – Maria was diagnosed with breast cancer.

After sharing her diagnosis, Brenda connected Maria to the care team at Ascension Columbia St. Mary’s Cancer Center. Today, Maria is cancer free and doing well. Brenda often sees her at community events, and they take time to catch up on what’s new in their lives.

Ascension Columbia St. Mary’s Hospital, Milwaukee

Bringing Pediatric Psychologists into the Pediatrician’s Office

When Derell was eight years old, he had trouble staying focused in school and following all the rules. He was repeatedly disciplined for fidgeting, tapping his pencil and talking out of turn. Even worse, he was starting to show signs of depression as a result of his struggles at school and with his peers. His mom, Etta, was often being called into school because of Derell’s behavior issues.



Etta, Derell, & Dr. Nick Young

When Children’s Wisconsin opened the Midtown Clinic near their home in Milwaukee, Etta jumped at the chance to take Derell there. At an appointment with a Children’s Wisconsin pediatrician, a behavioral health screening showed Derell’s challenges with attention and self-regulation were contributing to his problems. The behavioral health provider team was called in.

The Integrated Behavioral Health program brings behavioral health therapists and pediatric psychologists into the primary care setting and involves them in every aspect of care, from informal conversations to short-term treatment within the child’s regular medical care. Nick Young, PhD, met with Derell, his mom and his pediatrician and offered some short-term interventions and support. They developed a care plan that included individual appointments with Dr. Young. Once he was receiving the care he needed, Derell’s behavior transformed rapidly: his grades improved and he was getting along with other kids. With donor support, Children’s has supported the initial two-year pilot of the Integrated Behavioral Health program and plans for future expansion are underway. For Derell, having Dr. Young in his corner meant the world.

Children’s Wisconsin-Milwaukee Hospital

Maternal Addiction Recovery Center

Addiction to heroin and opiates is a growing problem in communities across the state. The negative impact of addiction can be devastating, especially so for pregnant women and their babies.

To address this, our hospital introduced the Maternal Addiction Recovery Center (MARC) program in 2015. This innovative program provides care for pregnant women who are addicted to opioids (heroin or prescription opioids). The program address both the physical and emotional aspects of addiction utilizing:

- Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) interventions that can reduce the potential harm of pre- and post-natal substance exposure to the fetus
- Integrated behavioral health and pre- and post-natal nursing support throughout pregnancy and postpartum
- Ongoing substance-abuse counseling throughout pregnancy and postpartum – a safe place for mothers to share their story and support their peers
- Referrals to additional substance abuse treatment six weeks post-delivery

Women can start the program at any time during their pregnancy. The goal is to create healthier outcomes for the baby with the mother's increased engagement in therapy and pre-natal care, reducing the effects of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and the time the baby needs to stay in the neo-natal intensive care unit.

"Being pregnant while dealing with an addiction is scary – I knew it was not healthy or safe, but the addiction can feel overwhelming," said a former MARC participant. "The MARC program saved me and my daughter."

In 2018, 49 women were enrolled in the program at our hospital.

[Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee](#)

PTSD Follow-up Calls for Trauma Patients

Behavioral health is a top health issue for Waukesha County. In 2017, 18% of Waukesha County adults reported experiencing a mental health condition such as depression, anxiety disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder in the past three years.

Traumatic experiences, such as an accident, violence, natural disaster or serious illnesses may trigger a variety of physical symptoms, behaviors, or intense emotions. Many people recover gradually but sometimes a more serious mental health problem such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression may develop.

One effective therapeutic approach for PTSD is talking treatments with a clinical psychologist, in which the person with PTSD is encouraged to talk through their experiences in detail. In 2018, our hospital began completing PTSD screening calls to trauma patients 30-45 days after discharge and provided referrals to mental health providers when appropriate.

To further support the community, our hospital also provided a peer-led trauma support group for anyone who has experienced traumatic injury.

[Aurora Medical Center Summit](#)

Hop in to Health Care

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood obesity is a serious problem in the United States, putting kids at risk for poor health. Despite recent declines in the prevalence among preschool-aged children, obesity among all children is still too high.

Physical activity and nutrition ranked among the top five health issues for Washington County. Sixty-one percent of the children in Washington County engaged in physical activity for 60 minutes at least five days out of the week. Seventy-one percent of adults in Washington County reported eating the recommended fruit servings, while 34% of adults reported eating the recommended vegetable servings; Washington County adults' fruit and vegetable consumption steadily improved since 2005. Key informants identified physical activity and nutrition as a top five health issue.

Our hospital partners with local schools to facilitate the Hop in to Health Care program, which places health care professionals in schools to reach children during the school day rather than requiring the children and their family members to come to us. This format has been well received by the communities. The program's curriculum focuses on wellness and education topics, including healthy eating, healthy behaviors, exercise, screen time and sleep, youth first aid and health careers.

In 2018, we conducted one Hop into Health Care program for 59 sixth grade students. Of those, 58 showed knowledge gain, 57 reported increased physical activity, and 58 reported healthier food choices following program completion.

[Aurora Medical Center Washington County, Hartford](#)

Youth Apprenticeship

In 2015, seven of the 10 hardest positions to fill were related to health care. Employment of health care occupations is projected to grow 19% from 2014 to 2024, adding about 2.3 million new jobs. As a hospital, we are fully engaged in supporting the educational preparation of health care professionals to meet existing and future workforce needs so we can continue to meet the health care needs of our community.



Maria Gonzalez of Milwaukee has her blood pressure checked at the Ascension St. Francis Hospital Family Health Night by cardiovascular technician, Tressa Gonzalez, Ascension St. Francis Hospital.

Our hospital recently began collaborating with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's Youth Apprenticeship Program, a statewide School-to-Work initiative. Students in this program provide at least 450 work hours per year, while also taking a class each semester focused on the health care industry in addition to completing their high school curriculum.

Through this partnership, we are addressing workforce shortages by employing students enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Certification program. Not only are we able to help fill employment gaps, we are also able to provide students in their junior and senior years of high school with an opportunity to experience hands-on learning. By offering relevant work experience, we hope to encourage these students to continue learning and advancing their career.

We hired 11 students in the first quarter of 2019.

[Aurora West Allis Medical Center](#)

Ascension St. Francis Hospital Hosts Family Health Night in Milwaukee

Ascension St. Francis Hospital hosted a free health night celebration in August at Holt Park in Milwaukee. More than 300 neighbors participated and got the chance to meet doctors, nurses and other health professionals in an atmosphere of fun and hands-on learning.

Dozens of activities geared for audiences of all ages were available that informed participants about healthy eating, stroke, breast health, diabetes and more.

"A night like this gets families talking about how to stay healthy and provides an up-close look into what happens in emergency situations and hospitals, introducing them to the professionals who help save lives. We give kids a positive interaction with health care professionals, police officers and other emergency first responders," said Marc Trznadel, administrative director, patient care services/operations, Ascension St. Francis Hospital.

Fun activities for children included a life-sized game of Operation and a Teddy Bear Clinic, where they were able to give a routine check-up to stuffed animals using a stethoscope and syringes. Music, face painting and free ice cream provided by the Milwaukee Police Department were enjoyed by many.

Other services and activities included spiritual services, mental health information, first aid, a wheel chair obstacle course, diabetes education, stress reduction, Seaton Dental Clinic, blood pressure checks, stroke awareness, Blanket of Love and raffles.

[Ascension St. Francis Hospital, Milwaukee](#)

Bringing Oral Health Care Directly to Schools

In Milwaukee, nearly 60,000 children live in poverty with limited access to a dentist – putting them at high risk for tooth decay, infection and dental pain that keeps them out of school.

Tooth decay is preventable, and ensuring that children have the preventive oral health services they need keeps them healthy and ready to learn. That’s why Ascension Wisconsin created its Smart Smiles school-based oral health program in 2001. Today, the program serves more than 12,000 children a year at 83 participating Milwaukee Public Schools.

Smart Smiles provides families, students and community members a wide array of oral health services—whatever their circumstances may be. Like earlier this year, when a Smart Smiles hygienist saw Tyler* at Hopkins Lloyd School. At the time, Tyler didn’t have any pain or discomfort in his mouth and the hygienist saw no signs of tooth decay. Tyler received oral health education, sealants and a fluoride treatment.

A few months after his initial visit, Smart Smiles Coordinator Ellie received a phone call from the nurse at Hopkins Lloyd. Tyler had fallen on the playground and chipped his front tooth. Ellie scheduled an appointment for Tyler the next day at Ascension Seton Dental Clinic on Milwaukee’s south side. Tyler came to the clinic with his mom and left with a healthy smile.

This story is an example of our “Mission in Action” – providing compassionate, personalized care to all people. As an integrated system of care, we were able to provide Tyler with the care he needed, when and where he needed it because of our Smart Smiles program and the relationships we build with students, their families and staff members.

[Ascension Wisconsin, Milwaukee](#)

Primary Care Hub Developed for Medication-Assisted Treatment

Opiates, or opioids, include prescription pain medication like oxycodone or hydrocodone and street drugs such as heroin. Opioid abuse has drastically increased in recent years in the U.S., Wisconsin and Milwaukee County.

Substance abuse is a complex problem that not only affects the life of the individual using but also the well-being of their family, friends and community. Thankfully, with the right treatment and support, people battling opioid addictions can re-claim control of their lives.

The opiate recovery program at Aurora Psychiatric Hospital’s Dewey Center offers medication-assisted treatment to provide a bridge between opioid addiction and recovery. In 2019, we opened our Primary Care Hub for Medication-Assisted Treatment, with primary care physicians staffing Tuesdays,

Thursday mornings, and Fridays. There were 13 visits in the first quarter of 2019.

This assistance reinforced with additional group and individual therapies can help people regain control over their addictions. Our goal is to help our patients move through the initial addiction treatment process, learn how to cope with stressful situations without using drugs, rebuild relationships with their families and friends and develop social support for long-term recovery.

[Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa](#)

ProHealth Care Summer Meals program

ProHealth Care provided 2,191 free Summer Meals to local children in 2019 as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Summer Food Service Program. The federally funded, state-administered program provides kids in designated low-income areas with free meals when school cafeterias are closed for the summer. ProHealth contributes employee time to make the meals and manage the local program.

To kick off the 2019 program, ProHealth held a neighborhood event in association with the Waukesha Food Pantry, Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, and Waukesha fire and police departments. The event included fun activities, Summer Meals and free bike helmets, helmet fittings and giveaways for children.



“We want to make sure that if a child needs a meal, they can find it at our hospitals,” said Andy Bergman, ProHealth manager of food services. “Our Community Benefit team does a great job of letting people know about it.”

Summer Meals are provided at ProHealth Waukesha Memorial Hospital and ProHealth Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital throughout the summer. The nutritious meals are prepared fresh at the hospital’s cafes. Local families can bring children age 18 or younger to a hospital cafe for the boxed meals. Cafe signs and employees direct families to the meals.

“The entire staff has embraced the program – everyone is willing to help,” said Sarah Butz, ProHealth director of community benefit. “It’s rewarding to know that so many children and their families are receiving the nutrition they need.”

[ProHealth Care, Waukesha](#)

Southern Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:
\$380,930,365**

Teamwork Helps Indigent Patients and Prevents Readmissions

Fort HealthCare's Indigent Patient Discharge Prescription program is making a long-term impact to reduce 30-day readmissions for the same diagnosis. The need was identified by Fort HealthCare's pharmacy team as part of a review of causes for readmissions.

When patients cannot afford their medications at discharge from the hospital, the Fort Memorial Foundation provides funding for short-term needs until discharge planners can help them get access to the medications they need through other programs. Common issues for these patients include lacking insurance coverage, the need to sign up for assistance programs with pharmaceutical companies, or weekend discharges while pharmacies and medical supplies stores are closed.

This innovative program helped prevent readmissions for 90% of the high-risk patients served. The results also showed that 74% of the prescriptions cost less than \$30. The average cost of a prescription is \$48. The program's success is a result of the teamwork of our pharmacy, discharge planners, quality department, nursing teams and medical staff.

Fort HealthCare's Foundation Board is committed to ongoing assistance for these patients. It is proving to be a low-cost and effective expression of our mission to improve the health and well-being of our community.

Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

Free Care for Those Who Need it the Most

Serving those less fortunate and providing free and affordable care has always been a critical part of Mercyhealth's mission. Millions of uninsured and underinsured individuals across the United States routinely forego costly preventive care despite the sometimes tragic outcomes. Our community is no exception to this ever-growing, disturbing trend.

To help bridge the gap, we consistently offer free health screenings, classes, presentations and support groups, and sponsor hundreds of community organizations each year. In the last fiscal year, we've been able to expand our commitment to the community in several ways, including:

- Mercyhealth Development Foundation's House of Mercy Charity Ball event raised over \$150,000 to help area homeless families find short-term shelter and access to community resources to get them back on their feet.
- Mercyhealth donated \$100,000 to the Blackhawk Technical College's nursing program in Rock County to improve nursing student recruitment and retention as well as fill anticipated nursing shortages in Rock and Green counties.
- Mercyhealth is a supporter of HealthNet, a free and affordable clinic in Janesville, improving the well-being of uninsured and underinsured community. Beyond our doctors and nurses volunteering time and talents to serve clients, we donate medical items, supplies, provide free vision exams plus frames/lenses at cost and donate 50% of the cost of lab services.



Mercyhealth resident physicians provide over 450 hours of care annually to HealthNet patients.

Mercyhealth is also a long-time supporter of various community causes including City of Janesville events, Freedom Fest, YMCA, YWCA of Rock County, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and the Rock County 4-H Fair.

Mercyhealth has provided \$120 million in free health care and services over the last decade to help those who otherwise could not afford care. In 2018 alone, Mercyhealth's Janesville hospital and clinics delivered \$150.8 million in health care services to its Medicaid patients, only \$33.5 million was reimbursed to Mercyhealth, equaling \$117.3 million of free Medicaid care. In addition, Mercyhealth delivered \$3.1 million in free health care in 2018 alone. What we strive to give, however, are the things that cannot be measured. Health care is mission-driven, and our mission is healing those who need us most.

Mercyhealth, Janesville

Committed to Coverage for All

When the Affordable Care Act was implemented in 2014, many area residents were left needing to purchase health insurance from the marketplace but unable to afford the premiums. UW Health recognized the need and created a fund to provide financial assistance to those people. Working with the United Way of Dane County and Unity Health Insurance (now known as Quartz), they established HealthConnect, a premium subsidy program for qualified Dane County residents.

Since HealthConnect launched in 2014, it has served approximately 2,250 people. UW Health contributed more than \$7 million over that time to cover the premium expenses, while the United Way of Dane County manages the fund and Quartz pays for the administrative needs.

HealthCare participants frequently share how much they appreciate the program. Here are just a few comments from enrollees:

"I greatly appreciate the assistance to me and my family. It is becoming harder to pay the premium, and with my daughter's special needs, I cannot afford to not have insurance."

"I have received the best care under this plan. I have a serious condition which is better maintained than ever since enrolling in this plan."

"I would be lost without HealthConnect. It has helped so much. We can't afford food sometimes, so it's great to know I can get health care if I need it. It's a big relief to the stress of being poor! Thank you so much!!!"

UW Health, Madison

Stoughton Hospital Long-Time Supporter of The Free Health Clinic

The Free Health Clinic is a non-for-profit clinic offering free primary health, wellness, prevention and treatment to adults who have no health insurance or are under-insured. The Free Health Clinic serves residents of Stoughton, Evansville, Oregon, McFarland, Brooklyn, Cambridge, Deerfield and Cottage Grove – similar to the Stoughton Hospital service area. The clinic is staffed by volunteer physicians, advanced nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers and other volunteers, many whom work or have worked at Stoughton Hospital.



Laurie Borgers, Grateful Patient

Stoughton Hospital employees volunteer their time and talents at the clinic in many ways, whether it's serving on the board, treating patients, consulting on special projects or taking part in a "work day" at the clinic. The hospital collaborates with the clinic by providing and funding medical imaging and laboratory diagnostics needed for the patients they serve. The hospital accepts referrals from the clinic and assists patients with resources such as navigating the health insurance market.

Laurie Borgers is a patient at the Free Health Clinic. She is a single woman with chronic health issues that need medical oversight. She lives on a small farm and is caretaker to three family members. She works part time but is not eligible for health insurance. Laurie is trying to find employment that provides health insurance but allows her to continue to care for her family.

"Finding the Free Health Clinic has eased a huge emotional and physical bleak spot. They lift me up. I am grateful for their help in keeping me strong and vibrant."

Stoughton Hospital Association

Health Issues Tackled Through Free Screenings and Wellness Challenges

Fort HealthCare's Community Health and Wellness department can be seen all year long at numerous community events such as farmer's markets, school events, health fairs, community run/walks and many others, with screeners checking blood pressure and making sure people understand their numbers.

This past year their theme was "Knowing Your Numbers" and making sure people understand what various blood pressure numbers mean. In addition to blood pressure they were able to discuss the importance of understanding cholesterol, glucose and HbA1C, BMI and waist circumference. It's an opportunity to give information to people who might not be aware of how these numbers influence their health.

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (lower is better)	and	Diastolic mm Hg (lower is better)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Elevated	120-129	and	less than 80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	130-139	or	80-89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Seek Emergency Care)	higher than 180	and/or	higher than 120

The free screenings are a place where they can educate and make referrals if care is necessary. In many cases they found people who had not seen a provider in years due to financial constraints. They are able to use these events to promote Fort HealthCare's partner, the Rock River Free Clinic, which provides care for uninsured people of Jefferson County. At the free screenings, Fort HealthCare can identify risks and promote the free community health challenges they offer throughout the year. The challenges help keep people motivated to maintain their level of activity and awareness surrounding their health and increase healthy behaviors. Challenges are one way Fort

HealthCare works to engage employees, local businesses, and community members in adopting positive lifestyle changes to better their overall health.

Between the free education/screenings at the community events and the year-round challenges, Fort HealthCare can impact many people to make sure they have the resources they need to stay on top of their health. For information on Fort HealthCare's wellness challenges visit www.forthhealthcare.com/wellness/challenges.

Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

SANE Program Keeps Delicate Patients Close to Home

According to the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, it's estimated one in three women have been a victim of sexual assault at some point in her life. Two-thirds of these victims of reported assaults are under the age of 15. It's alarming statistics like these that prompted Mercyhealth to expand its emergency services to include a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program in 2011, a service aimed to reduce sexual assault and help victims gain the necessary emergency services and support they need.

A SANE professional is a registered nurse who has received specialized education and fulfilled clinical requirements to perform forensic examinations of patients who report sexual assault. Mercyhealth's SANE program, the only one of its kind in Rock County, provides comprehensive care and has the expertise to offer effective courtroom testimony. At Mercyhealth Hospital and Trauma Center- Janesville, specially trained sexual assault nurses examine sexual assault patients in a private setting. Attention is focused on their care, comfort and emergency assistance.

Children who are victims of abuse or neglect need a safe place to talk about what happened to them and to get the medical care they need. Mercyhealth partners with local agencies, such as law enforcement, advocacy groups and organizations like the YWCA of Rock County's CARE House to make the process easier. This year alone, Mercyhealth has examined over 80 patients; 70% of those patients were children.

The extensive exam process includes evidence collection and can take as long as four hours. An exam is costly. Of these cases, the State of Wisconsin only reimburses Mercyhealth a percentage of the overall cost. Mercyhealth absorbs over \$700 for each patient. So far this year, Mercyhealth has forgiven over \$54,000.

Mercyhealth, Janesville

On the Front Lines of the Mental Health Crisis

Nearly one in five Americans struggle with mental illness, though many go untreated. SSM Health Monroe Clinic Hospital recognizes the most effective way to tackle this nationwide epidemic is at the local level.

For over five years, SSM Health Monroe Clinic Hospital has offered Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training throughout their service region — for community members, teachers, paramedics, ministers, family members and all who may serve as the first point contact for those dealing with a mental health crisis.



Community members participated in a Mental Health First Aid Training at Union Presbyterian Church in Monroe

“As a community health care provider, it’s not only our calling to address this need, but the local level is where we do our best work,” said Mike Sanders, SSM Health Monroe Clinic Hospital president & CEO.

SSM Health Monroe Clinic Hospital partners with Journey Mental Health and CONTACT of Northern Illinois to host the program each year throughout Southern Wisconsin and Northwestern Illinois. The training teaches the ALGEE action plan:

- A**ssess risk of suicide or harm
- L**isten non-judgmentally
- G**ive reassurance and information
- E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

Attendees often provide feedback, explaining what MHFA means to them. One woman recently shared her story:

“Mental health challenges are part of my everyday life. My husband has mental and chronic health issues, while my daughter deals with anxiety and panic attacks. It not only offered us helpful resources, but it eased the isolation that accompanies mental health struggles. Often, you feel like you are the only one going through tough times, and no light at the end of the tunnel. The training helped us see we were not alone, while giving us tools and hope for a brighter future.”

Mental Health First Aid is one of many SSM Health Monroe Clinic Hospital initiatives connected to the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which identifies mental health as one of the region’s top health priorities. As a member of the Green County Healthy Community Coalition, SSM Health Monroe Clinic Hospital collaborates with the health department and other local leaders to coordinate efforts.

“We hear many heartbreaking stories from families struggling to help their loved one through a mental health crisis. Having trained over 350 individuals from all walks of life, we know MHFA impacts these individual lives,” explained Tammie Jamiska, community outreach specialist. “Our hope is that over time, it also encourages a cultural transformation where mental health awareness is commonplace in our community with less stigma.”

SSM Health Monroe Clinic Hospital, Monroe

Columbia County Opioid Task Force

In the span of seven days in the summer of 2018, six people overdosed from opioids and two people died from opioid overdose in Columbia County alone! We also see higher rates of opioid prescriptions dispensed, higher rates of Narcan administration, higher rates of drug-related hospital encounters, more children being born with substances in their system and increasing numbers of children placed in out of home care. Yet some in our community do not believe there is a problem or don’t believe they can do anything about it.



In response, Prairie Ridge Health assisted in forming a special task force to address the opioid epidemic, available and needed resources, and what the community can do from a prevention focus. The task force, with the help of area parents, students, community members, law enforcement, medical personnel and the support of hospital volunteers, created a series of three videos to spread their message. The purpose of the series is to educate the community at large, dispelling the myths around the opioid epidemic, and showing what the community can do, starting with prevention.

MYTHS

- The opioid epidemic is only in urban communities.
- Only young people are abusing opioids.
- Nothing can be done.

FACTS

- It is in rural communities, including Columbia County.
- Anyone can become dependent on opioid medications.
- There is help. There is hope. Everyone can do something.

Prairie Ridge Health, Columbus

Gundersen Moundview and A-F Elementary Pilot New Mentorship Program

During the 2018-2019 school year, Gundersen Moundview Hospital and Clinics partnered with Adams-Friendship Elementary School to pilot a new mentorship program to increase student success in the classroom.

The program paired 20 Gundersen Moundview employees with students for weekly visits.

“One of Gundersen Moundview’s goals is to establish and maintain partnerships in the communities we serve,” said Gundersen Moundview Administrator Frank Perez-Guerra. “This new partnership is an opportunity to impact the lives of local children and the greater community now and in the years to come. The children mentored today could go on to work at our hospital or do other great things in our community.”

The program’s goal is to help students transition into their school day with the desired outcomes of improving academic performance and increasing respectful, responsible and safe school behaviors. Mentors spend 45 minutes, one morning a week with their student.

“Mentors are additional caring adults in a student’s life,” said Gundersen Moundview Mentor Program Outreach Coordinator Tammy Lowrey. “They spend time talking to the student, providing encouragement and helping them get ready for their school day. Studies have shown that mentors have a big impact on a child’s life, leading to their success as an adult.”

“We’re excited for what this program could do for our students and learning environment,” said Adams-Friendship Elementary Principal Roxanne Irey. “It will enhance our existing programs, help build youth resiliency and provide support for our teachers and staff.”

“We hope to continue to expand this program each year to impact more children in our community,” Perez-Guerra said.

The Gundersen Moundview Adams-Friendship Elementary Mentor Program was developed with support from Gundersen Health System’s Global Partners-At Home program. Global Partners-At Home partners with schools and organizations throughout the Tri-State region to help foster resilience in students, teachers and families. The focus is on making a long-term, sustainable impact in the community. To learn more about Global Partners, visit gundersenhealth.org/global-partners.

Gundersen Moundview Hospital and Clinics, Friendship

Madison Health Systems Partner to Address Health Disparities

Healthy Dane Funders, comprising Group Health Cooperative of South-Central Wisconsin, SSM Health, UnityPoint Health-Meriter and UW Health, has made a three-year commitment of \$300,000 to support the Foundation for Black Women’s Wellness’ efforts to address health disparities affecting African-American women. The gift will fund work primarily aimed at heart health and maternal and child health.



Members of Healthy Dane Funders collaborative present a check to the Foundation for Black Women's Wellness for their first installment of their contribution

Lisa Peyton-Caire, founder and president of the Foundation, said the priorities, especially the focus on mothers and children, arose from the pressing health needs of Black women in Dane County and the hospitals’ community health needs assessment.

“As an organization led by and for women of color, we are deeply committed to reducing and eliminating the disparities that disproportionately impact Black women and their families in Dane County. We’re excited and grateful for the Collaborative’s generous support and partnership as we work to reduce the impact of chronic illnesses like heart disease among Black women, and to improve our birth outcomes in a time where twice as many Black babies in Dane County die in their first year of life compared to white infants,” said Peyton-Caire.

“The Foundation has established itself as an effective leader and advocate for Black women’s health in the community, and this gift responds to the need to fund this work with significant ongoing financial support,” said Juli Aulik, UW Health community relations director. “Its many volunteers deserve to have their efforts amplified, and their leadership recognized as being a part of the community the organization serves.”

[UW Health, Madison](#)

Free Six-Week Workshop for Community Members: "Every Diabetic Counts"

The Richland Hospital’s Diabetes Prevention and Support program provides a six-week workshop to community members who are at risk for or diagnosed with diabetes, are involved in the care of someone with diabetes or are living with a chronic health condition. Workshops meet for two hours weekly and are offered free of charge. They are led by trained volunteer peer educators.



The nine initial peer educators trained for the program

In the three years since its formation, nine workshops have been held in Richland Center and surrounding communities and over 70 people have attended.

Results showed participants had improved behaviors around glucose monitoring, medication taking and physical activity. Increased levels of confidence interacting with health care providers and better ways of coping with stress were additional benefits observed.

Technical support, training and materials were provided by MetaStar, Inc. as a part of the “Every Diabetic Counts” initiative.

[The Richland Hospital, Inc., Richland Center](#)

RAMC Provides Solution for those with Metabolic Syndrome

One in three American adults has prediabetes (CDC 11/14/18). Aggressive lifestyle changes can delay or derail the onset of serious diseases. Chronic Disease along with Nutrition & Physical Activity are two of the top priorities identified in Reedsburg Area Medical Center’s (RAMC’s) 2019 Community

Health Needs Assessment. RAMC’s goal is to engage with community members who have these conditions and teach them how to lead a full and healthy life through its HEALTH 4 U Program. Working with RAMC’s registered dietitians and health and fitness professionals, the goal of the program is to expand participant’s nutrition and exercise knowledge.

This PREVENT T2 CDC-approved program is proven to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. It includes:

- A year-long program with weekly meetings for six months, then once or twice /month for second six months
- Support from fellow participants as new skills are learned
- Information from RAMC’s registered dietitians and health professionals to expand like knowledge
- Information about tools like food and exercise trackers
- Access to an on-site fitness center
- Small class sizes – limited to 12 participants

The HEALTH 4 U Program was modeled after other programs with demonstrated success — between 58% -78% reductions in the chances for at-risk members from developing type 2 diabetes!

RAMC is excited to continue helping our community members live long and happy lives, and seeing our participants make changes that affect their health for the long term.

[Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg](#)

Community Paramedicine

The collaborative Community Paramedicine program is an innovative health care partnership between Madison Fire Department (MFD) paramedics and the UnityPoint Health - Meriter emergency department. The group works together to support area patients who are frequent, high-volume users of both the 911 system and the emergency department, often for health issues that can be better addressed proactively. A team including emergency department personnel, social work, care coordination, addiction medicine and others meets regularly to discuss all aspects of each patient's health.

MFD Paramedics regularly visit these patients in their homes and provide a comprehensive combination of medical, social and wellness visits. Patients are empowered to take control and ownership of their health and well-being, thus reducing their health crises. The community paramedics further help patients connect with community resources, reduce barriers to their essential needs, and successfully access their existing primary medical care. Along the way, patients know that the safety net of the fire department and emergency department are always available, however are now less needed.

This program, which debuted in April 2016, has been immensely successful. Patients have drastically reduced their calls to 911, visits to the emergency department and hospital admissions. Beyond the data, patients have benefited from the social aspects of the program becoming more active in the community, be it taking the bus, going for walks or visiting local food pantries.

UnityPoint Health – Meriter, Madison

Mental Health First Aid Helps Anyone Save a Life

Approximately one in five adults in Sauk Prairie Healthcare’s service area experience mental illness in a given year, according to the 2018 Sauk Prairie Healthcare Community Health Needs Assessment. Of 14 public health issues, area residents ranked mental health as their number one concern.

Sauk Prairie Healthcare Foundation has sponsored Mental Health First Aid Courses at Sauk Prairie Hospital and in the neighboring rural communities of Black Earth, Lodi and Spring Green, bringing awareness to the issue and helping participants intervene in a crisis.

Within a week of training, one participant felt compelled to seriously ask a man she knew how he was feeling, then whether he was planning to take his own life. She then followed through with the rest of the QPR procedure – question, persuade, refer.

“I told him I was not getting out of his car until we got some help,” said Sarah Smith. “I called the suicide prevention hotline and he talked with them.”

Mental Health First Aid is a free eight-hour training program, which teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of addiction and mental illness. The class is taught by a certified instructor following a national curriculum, emphasizing hope and recovery.

“This display of courage demonstrates the impact that one kind, compassionate and knowledgeable human being can have on a hurting world,” said Dr. Janelle Hupp, a primary care physician at Sauk Prairie Healthcare. “I’m gratified to know that Sauk Prairie Healthcare Foundation helped arm her with the tools she needed to intervene.”

Sauk Prairie Healthcare, Prairie du Sac

UW Health Establishes Critical Access Food Pantry

UW Health has been screening patients for food insecurity for several years. Currently 250 patients screen positively for food insecurity each month. Additionally, an average of 100 patients are diagnosed with malnutrition during their hospitalization. This means that approximately 350 patients are sent home without adequate food resources or when they are too weak to go to the supermarket or cook for themselves. These patients are at high risk of readmission simply due to lack of appropriate foods at home. To address this gap, UW Health established a critical access food pantry to send these patients home with a short-term supply of food.



UW Health staff stocks food pantry for patients in need

The UW Health Critical Access Food Pantry functions as a resource for patients in need to provide time to set up additional nutrition-related assistance through community resources or arrange assistance from family or friends following discharge. Patients are given a three-day food supply tailored to their individual medical and cultural needs and preferences and serves as an example of a quality meal. Each box of food includes information related to Second Harvest Food Bank, food pantries local to the patient and contact information for Wisconsin’s 2-1-1 hotline, a resource for addressing many social determinants of health.

A few days after the patient is discharged, a dietetic intern follows up with the patient to talk about the food they received from the critical access pantry and ensure they are pursuing additional community-based services.

UW Health is proud to provide this resource to some of their most vulnerable patients.

UW Health, Madison

10 in 10 Program Provides Sustainability in Weight Loss

SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital - Janesville launched a new type of weight-loss program, 10 in 10, in January 2019. The primary goal of the program is to partner with community members to lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks. This evidence-informed program was led by Megan Timm, Community Education Specialist, and is supported by our recent triannual Community Health Needs Assessment, which revealed that Rock County was the second most obese county in the state.

10 in 10's focus was not only on the numbers the scale reflected, but rather on our personal habits with food including why we eat certain foods, how much we consume and ways to increase nutrient-dense foods into the diet each day. Each week a new topic was presented to explore participant behaviors and relationships with food while providing a challenge and opportunity to practice new techniques for sustainable weight loss.

Over 70 participants completed the 10-week program with a total weight loss of over 575 pounds. Regarding her success with the program, one participant shared, "This is the first weight loss class I have taken that has introduced me to so many related topics with true challenges that supported the information presented each week. Having opportunities to weigh in and be accountable was priceless."

Though the goal of 10 in 10 set out to be weight loss, this was just a piece of the overall success of the program. The program encouraged participants to understand their personal habits that prevented them from losing weight and how to make better decisions supporting weight loss. Additionally, the program created a community of diverse people who developed long-term friendships and support systems which lasted long beyond the 10-week program.

SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital, Janesville

Our Future

We are committed to investing in the future of rural health care workers. Nationally, and in the state of Wisconsin, the health care workforce shortage has been a topic of conversation for years. To address this need, we started three new training programs focusing on the rural workforce. We applied for and were awarded two Grants from the State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services: the Allied Health Professional Education and Training Grant for Surgical Technicians, and the Rural Clinical Training for Advanced Practice Clinicians. Both programs established a formal clinical training experience for surgical technology students, physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

The surgical technician program began in October 2018 and will continue through May 31, 2020. To date we have had six students complete a clinical rotation with two more scheduled for fall 2019.

The advanced practice clinician program began in July of 2018 and conclude in June of 2019, resulting in eight students (mix of PAs and NPs) completing rotation within family medicine, internal medicine, orthopedic and general surgery with three more students scheduled for fall 2019.

In addition, we started a rural rotation program with the Medical College of Wisconsin to host medical students interested in rural medicine. These students engaged in clinical rotations among a variety of specialists, focusing on providing high-quality care in a rural environment.

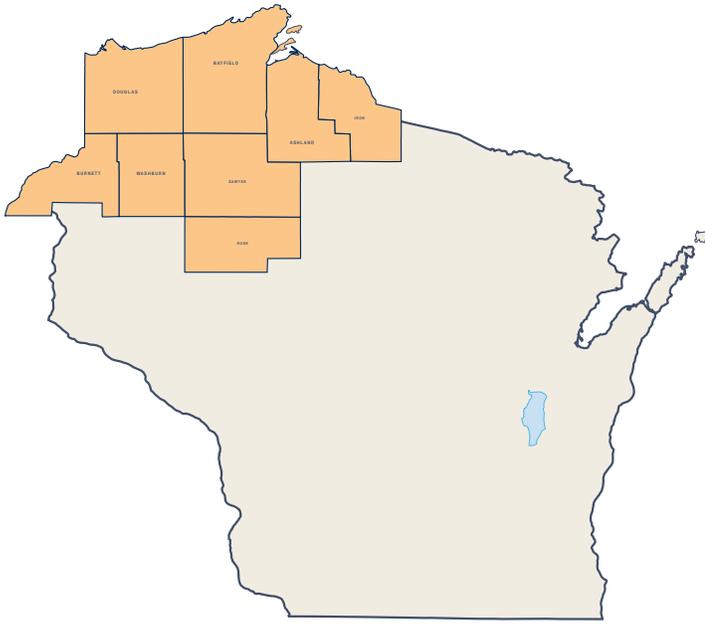


Judy MacDonald (APNP) and Tiana Imhoff (PA-C) Providers at Prairie Ridge Health

These three programs complemented our long-running Club Scrub, Job Shadow and Nurse Clinical Rotation Preceptorship to provide continuity for those who choose to seek out a career in health care.

Prairie Ridge Health, Columbus

Vikingland Region



Total Region Community Benefits:
\$22,259,349

FREE Sports Physicals for Student Athletes

Memorial Medical Center (MMC) in Ashland conducted free sports physicals to local school athletes at the end of July this year. Everyone was asked to bring a non-perishable food item to their visit. During the three days of appointments, staff performed a total of 84 physicals and collected four boxes of food for The BRICK Ministries.

The BRICK is a faith-based, non-profit organization that serves low-income residents of Ashland and Bayfield counties. They help with the hungry in our community and provide food items to families in need.



MMC is a critical access hospital with over 60 full-time physicians on staff and over 400 employees. Located in the city of Ashland, MMC

serves as a regional medical referral center for patients from seven northwestern Wisconsin counties and the neighboring Gogebic County of Michigan. We are committed to making a positive impact in the communities we serve. We are all an important piece of what makes this area so special!

[Memorial Medical Center of Ashland](#)

Burnett Medical Center Assesses Behavioral Health Initiative

The 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment has identified behavioral health to be Burnett County's second most significant health need. Burnett Medical Center (BMC) is addressing the growing problem by engaging with Wisconsin legislators to increase the number of hospital beds in the region for people experiencing behavioral health emergencies.

In August 2019, Patty Schachtner, Wisconsin State Senator for the 10th District, visited BMC to listen to the challenges in rural health care. Burnett County is a behavioral health provider shortage area. The number of county crisis calls have been increasing. In 2015, there were 360 calls and in 2018 there were 425 calls made to the crisis line. Crisis calls made by youth has almost doubled.

While there are challenges, there are also opportunities. BMC has three hospital beds, formerly used for obstetrics, that could be converted to serve emergency behavioral health detentions.



Patty Schachtner getting a tour of BMC from Ned Moore (left), Tamra White (middle left) and Gordy Lewis (right).

Schachtner asked, "And if we have empty hospital beds that aren't being used and we have patients and clients that could use them, wouldn't it be a more effective and efficient use of our resources to keep those people local and bring the resources to them?"

By working to address this public health issue, BMC would not only increase the county's access to behavioral health services but would also help alleviate this statewide challenge. BMC's hope is to be a resource for community members and ultimately help improve behavioral health, so our community is a healthier place to live.

[Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg](#)

Understanding Teen Substance Use & Risks

Memorial Medical Center (MMC) is committed to reach out to our surrounding communities to meet their unique health care needs. To guide our community health improvement efforts, MMC partnered with Ashland County Health & Human Services Department, Bayfield County Health Department, Iron County Health Department and local community partners to collect health data, gather feedback on regional and local health needs and develop a coordinated plan to address priority health needs.

Two of the biggest health needs that were addressed in our community are mental health and alcohol and drug use, especially with teenagers. To help parents and guardians understand and recognize the risks involved with teen substance use, Behavioral Health Services of MMC hosted a Teen Substance Use & Risks Seminar. This free community educational event is one of many that MMC puts on to educate and connect people in our community with the resources they need. For many, it is a first step in the road to recovery.

Thomas Jensen, director of behavioral health services of MMC says, "Our community is affected by addiction, and our young people are particularly vulnerable. All of us need to take action to help others who struggle. It is our job as a community to welcome everyone of any age who is seeking recovery. Awareness and decreasing stigma is a fantastic start."

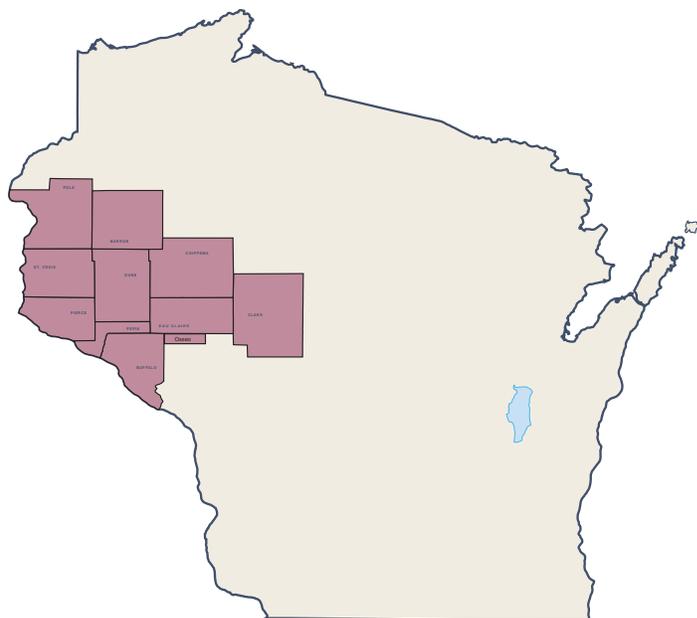


Jeanna and Katie from Behavioral Health Services of MMC

The risk factors associated with teen substance abuse, common drugs of abuse for teens and the risks related to them, and the signs of use/abuse were discussed at the seminar. There were also discussions about risk-reducing strategies and dialogues to use with teens regarding their knowledge of substance abuse. Attendees were also able to talk to MMC's behavioral health team for other resources like treatment facilities, support groups, or other programs for their family members who may be facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

Memorial Medical Center of Ashland

West Central Region



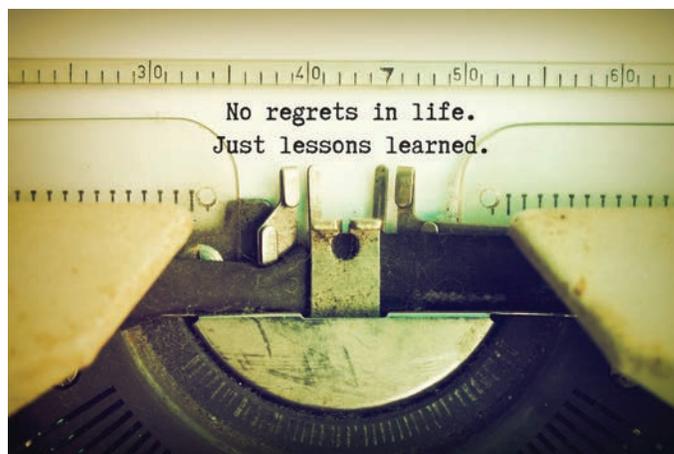
**Total Region Community Benefits:
\$64,134,755**

Hospital Colleague Offers Programs to Strengthen Mental Health

Often, Amy Segerstrom's day is filled with grief.

The Coordinator of The Healing Place: Center for Life's Journeys, a service of HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, helps others manage and find their way through grief after a loss. But that's not the only service she provides. Segerstrom is a huge proponent of living your best life.

"Through the No Regrets program, I am able to help people broaden their perspective on life in order to live their lives more intentionally," she said.



The class, which offers education, tools and exercises for participants, was what one woman needed who was finding her way through divorce. “As a result of taking the class, she knew what she wanted to focus on in her relationships for her future,” Segerstrom said. “She has learned to be more compassionate to herself and others.”

Another woman who received a recent chronic illness diagnosis felt more hopeful as she learned to focus on what she could still do physically and mentally. She created a plan for taking better care of herself.

All classes at The Healing Place are free. Segerstrom said that’s by design.

“It is our mission to serve those in need of our services regardless of their ability to pay, and we are very blessed to have donors who believe in and financially support our mission so that our services can remain free,” she said.

HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

Hospital Provides Life Saving CPR Device to Community

During a cardiac emergency, every second counts and Ascension Our Lady of Victory Hospital and Thorp EMS have a new life-saving CPR tool at their fingertips to improve patient outcomes.

Lucas 3™ portable compression devices provide high-quality chest compressions with minimal interruptions or pauses so that effective, lifesaving actions are initiated.



A Lucas 3™ Compression Device

The need for a Lucas 3™ Compression Device was identified by Registered Nurses Mindy Gindt and Amanda Mertens as part of the Ascension Wisconsin Nurse Residency Program (AWNRP). AWNRP is a 12-month program for newly-licensed registered nurses in their first 12-18 months of practice.

“Effective compressions during CPR are very important to ensure blood flow gets to all the important organs of the body,” said Gindt. “One of the chief benefits of the device is it replaces the need to rotate CPR rescuers every two minutes.”

Gindt and Mertens identified the need for a Lucas device at Ascension Our Lady of Victory, but they took things one step further in requesting a second unit to be deployed with a local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) partner.

“This is a great asset to our EMS partners in Thorp who provide services to four outlying townships that may require extended length of travel,” said Dawn Gapko, chief administrative officer at Ascension Our Lady of Victory. “It is also a prime example of our associates’ dedication to their profession and the community.”

Ascension Our Lady of Victory Hospital, Stanley

Ready, set, TRY!



Every spring since 2013, hundreds of children and families have joined PowerUp to try new activities, fruits and veggies during a week-long celebration.

PowerUp is a community-wide initiative to make it easy and fun for kids and families to eat better and move more. It’s a long-term commitment to create healthier communities throughout the St. Croix Valley and western Wisconsin, in partnership with HealthPartners hospitals and area schools, families, organizations and the entire community.

And every May, PowerUp Week is the perfect opportunity to honor these communities who work together to do what’s best for kids, year-round. It also happens to be the birth month of Chomp, PowerUp’s beloved superhero carrot mascot, who makes a number of guest appearances at events throughout the week.

New in 2019 was the PowerUp TRY-athlon, a resource to get kids excited to try at least three new fruits, veggies and activities.

By the numbers 2019:

- 850 people took part in PowerUp Week events including an animal hike at Willow River State Park, family boot camp at the YMCA in Hudson, open gym and swims in New Richmond, and cooking class in Amery.
- 248 people attended Chomp's 6th birthday parties at 8 libraries in the region
- 132 people took part in the PowerUp Family 2K Run/Walk in Amery
- 787 half-price salads were sold in the cafeterias at Hudson, Westfields, Amery and Lakeview hospitals

For more on PowerUp, visit powerup4kids.org.

HealthPartners (Amery Hospital & Clinic in Amery, WI, Hudson Hospital & Clinic in Hudson, WI, Westfields Hospital & Clinic in New Richmond, WI)

Innovative Partnership Tackles Food Insecurity in Chippewa Falls

The Legacy Community Center in Chippewa Falls launched in part due to strong leadership from Mayo Clinic Health System. The Center is the home for Agnes' Table, a program that provides home-cooked meals, a food pantry and clothing closet to those in need. Early founders envisioned a location that was open daily, where community members could get a meal, socialize and connect to other community supports.



Volunteers serving meals at the Legacy Community Center

With a \$25,000 Hometown Health Grant and leadership from Mayo Clinic Health System on its board of directors, the Center opened in the spring of 2018. By year end, it had provided food to over 908 households and the clothing closet was supplying

winter gear and blankets to the greater Chippewa Falls area. In the spring of 2019, the organization pursued an innovative partnership with the Chippewa Falls Area School District and received a second \$25,000 Hometown Health Grant. Looking to build job readiness skills, the school district and Community Center created an innovative partnership that provides a structured model for having students restock shelves, work the kitchen and help others as part of developing workforce readiness skills.

As the Legacy Community Center embarks upon a second year of operation, there is a strong recognition of the support received from Mayo Clinic Health System—through funding, leadership and other in-kind support—that is a testament to the power of how health care can partner more effectively with providers of social services to impact social determinants of health in a rural community.

[Mayo Clinic Health System - Northwest Wisconsin region](#)

Youth E-Cigarette Prevention Funds to Help Communities Curb Vaping



Marshfield Clinic Adolescent Medicine Specialist James Meyer, MD, participated in a panel discussion about vaping in July in Madison, sponsored by Wisconsin Health News. The session was sponsored in part by Marshfield Children's Hospital.

Reversing almost a decade of progress in youth tobacco prevention, e-cigarette use, or vaping, is growing among Wisconsin teens.

Marshfield Clinic Health System, through its Center for Community Health Advancement (CCHA), is responding by providing community funding to focus on e-cigarette prevention efforts.

Announcement of funding was made in May at an "E-Cigarettes and Our Youth: Partners in Prevention" forum in Eau Claire and Wausau, hosted by CCHA. Attendees represented health care, human service agencies, law enforcement, public health and prevention professionals, school administrators and people working with youth. Topics were tobacco history/trends, tobacco policy, tobacco's changing campaign and youth-led

prevention initiatives. Presenters represented The American Lung Association, county health departments and law enforcement. Recipients were named in August.

“Our Health System is very concerned about e-cigarettes, vaping and health impacts they have on youth,” said Jay Shrader, vice president, CCHA. “These funds are one way we plan to address e-cigarette use, representing a critical way to invest in our communities.”

A Wisconsin Department of Health Services public health advisory noted e-cigarette use has skyrocketed from 8% in 2014 to 20% in 2018 among Wisconsin teens, Shrader said, reversing almost a decade of progress in youth tobacco prevention.

The Health System’s \$500 stipends went to tax-exempt community organizations, local government agencies and schools to mobilize efforts on e-cigarette initiatives, up to \$20,000. Thirty-nine organizations are using funding to plan or implement initiatives including trainings, education and awareness, policy alignment with state and federal initiatives, treatment or enforcement.

Marshfield Medical Center, Eau Claire

We Care Program at Western Wisconsin Health

Food insecurity is identified as a lack of access at times to enough healthy food for an active healthy life. One in 10 adults and one in six children in Saint Croix and Pierce counties experience food insecurity. Food insecurity impacts a person’s ability to manage acute and chronic health conditions which can result in prolonged healing time and readmissions.

In the fall of 2017, the Green Bay Packers Foundation granted \$3,000 to the Western Wisconsin Health Foundation for the initiation of this program and we began in February of 2018.

Western Wisconsin Health wants to ensure that if a patient is identified with a food insecurity, we can provide them with not only healthy food options for a few days but resources they can utilize if more assistance is needed. Upon check in, a list of health questions is given to the patient. Two questions regarding food insecurity are part of this list:

1. Over the past 12 months, have you worried whether your food would run out before you got money to buy more?
2. Over the past 12 months, the food you bought just didn’t last and you didn’t have money to get more?



We Care Bags are filled with non-perishable food, supplies and resources to help those experiencing food insecurity.

If the patient answers often or sometimes to either question, a provider/staff member may talk with the patient about the We Care Program and resources available. A bag is given, and a social worker will also do a follow up call to provide any additional resources or materials for the patient. The recyclable bags contain canned vegetables, soups, fruits, peanut butter, bars, protein meals (tuna/chicken) and oatmeal. The bags are coordinated by the Eatery, Foundation, Volunteer Services and Community Health Wellness.

This has been a work in progress over the two years, and we have seen great utilization by a variety of staff and departments. On average, we are distributing around 20-24 bags per month and plan to go through over 200 by the end of 2019.

Back in April, Thrivent Financial donated \$4,000 to Western Wisconsin Health’s We Care Program. Jesse Kvittek and Thomas Olek are the two St. Croix financial representatives from Thrivent Financial Baldwin that helped these funds come to fruition for the We Care Program.

In all Thomas, his brother and friend raised roughly \$2,500 for the We Care Program at Western Wisconsin Health, and he hopes to have the 2nd annual ride next year for Wheels Down for We Care with more participants!

Because of Thrivent Financial, Wheels Down for We Care and some very caring individuals, the foundation has raised over \$10,000 to sustain this program through the summer of 2020.

Western Wisconsin Health, Baldwin

Cumberland Healthcare "Know Your Numbers"

Cumberland Healthcare educates its area communities on various health issues like obesity and diabetes by hosting a Know Your Numbers (KYN) Health Fair for the past 13 years. This free screening is open to the entire community and completed through a simple blood draw. Once results are known, participants are given necessary resources for a

better understanding of what they might be at risk for and the potential impact they have on their health. The Know Your Numbers Health Fair is offered at two of our clinic locations, Cumberland and Turtle Lake in May. All participants receive their results in the mail to see if they are at risk for obesity, diabetes or other chronic diseases. Residents can determine where they are at health-wise and make appropriate changes if needed. Screenings include blood pressure, total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL, HDL, glucose, body fat, and body mass index.

In 2019, Cumberland Healthcare had 376 participants come through the door. Twenty-five of those had diabetes and 39 had elevated fasting glucose and no knowledge of having diabetes. Of the participants that had their weight checked, 241 were overweight or had obesity, and 153 had elevated total cholesterol.



One in four people are unaware they have diabetes, and we hope to reach these individuals and help them combat the disease. Cumberland Healthcare offers pre-diabetic and diabetic education to the community based off results from Know Your Numbers. In the past 13 years, we have screened over 4,000 community members. A benefit of offering this event each year is the ability to track participants' health results to determine if individuals are making appropriate health changes based on their findings. All results are sent to the participant's health record for follow-up care as needed.

All the information from KYNs is sent to support the Community Health Needs Assessment of Barron County. The assessment determines what our focus will be for the following year. This year the focus is mental health, drug abuse and chronic disease.

Since women are often the caretakers of their family's health care, a decision was made to reach out to the men in the community for a Men's Health Night – a place to gather and openly discuss health issues that pertain to men. All attendees are encouraged to bring their lab results from Know Your Numbers for further discussion. A provider panel consisting

of MDs, pharmacists, and physical therapists were available for questions. The Men's Health Night event has doubled in participants every year. Cumberland Healthcare also hosts an annual Women's Health Night that includes health topics that pertain to women.

We work collaboratively across traditional boundaries to develop patient-centered practices that help make lifelong quality care accessible and affordable. Cumberland Healthcare is proud to be here for you.

[Cumberland Healthcare, Cumberland](#)

Hospital Offers Mental Health Education to Support Rural Community

The loneliness. The isolation. The pride.

Farmers and ranchers aren't often thought of when it comes receiving care for distressed mental health. But Laura Baalrud, director of HSHS Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's hospitals' 3D Community Health: Body.Mind.Spirit service, understands the complex issue and has been trained to help provide a solution.

Baalrud began teaching free Mental Health First Aid classes in Chippewa Valley communities in 2016 in response to the completed Community Health Needs Assessment, that revealed there were not enough mental health crisis beds or practitioners in western Wisconsin.

"We're always trying to recruit, and having enough beds is a complicated issue," she said. "Our goal is to educate people on what to look for in someone who is experiencing a mental health crisis. Maybe we can buy that person some time – keep them out of crisis beds."

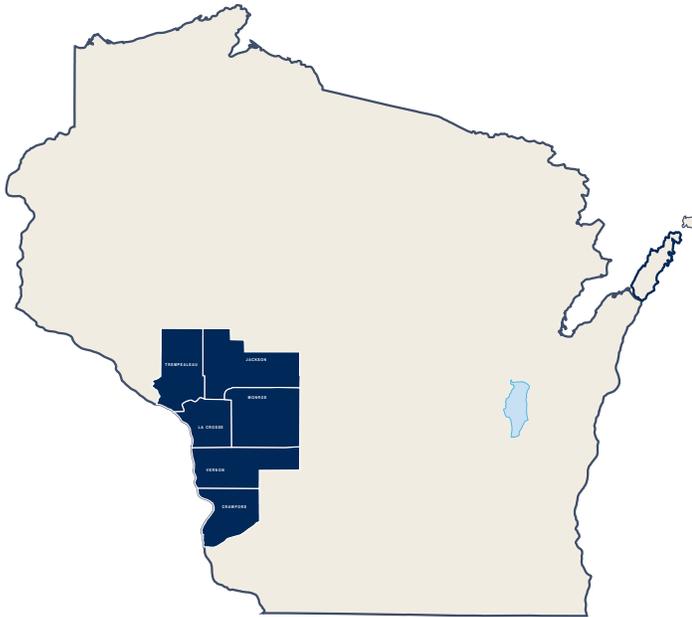
Teaching free Mental Health First Aid courses to people in western Wisconsin gives general knowledge to those interested in helping their family, friends and neighbors. Baalrud taught the general course, and then expanded to teach those in rural communities, working with farmers and ranchers who may be at great risk for deteriorating mental health, what to look for.

"The probability of (farmers) reaching out for help is much lower because they're used to taking care of their own problems," Baalrud said. "They encounter all sorts of hardships on the farm, and many were not raised in an environment where it's acceptable to talk about their mental health."

That's why HSHS St. Joseph's and Sacred Heart hospitals are teaching others the signs of stressed mental health, so they can help in a crisis.

[HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls](#)

Western Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:
\$180,728,204**

Salvation Army Match Day

On December 22, Mayo Clinic Health System matched the first \$15,000 raised at Salvation Army kettle sites throughout La Crosse County. At Mayo's request, all money raised went toward funding psychiatric and mental health services at the Salvation Army's emergency shelter in La Crosse. The Match Day gathered over \$33,000 in public donations — the highest daily total at kettles over the past three years. When combined with the dollars from Mayo, the Match Day generated enough money to fund psychiatric and mental health services at the shelter for an entire year.

"Mayo Clinic Health System has helped fund the Salvation Army of La Crosse County's psychiatric and mental health services in the past, but we wanted to do more," said Dr. Paul Mueller, regional vice president for Mayo Clinic Health System. "The Match Day offered a great opportunity to do just that."

Providing mental health services at the shelter improves access to care for this vulnerable population. Each week a psychiatrist meets with individuals and hosts group sessions at the shelter. When ongoing care is needed, referrals are made to local health care providers.

**Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare,
La Crosse**

Health System Donated to Family Promise of Monroe County

On December 17, Mayo Clinic Health System presented a \$10,000 donation to Family Promise of Monroe County. Homelessness is a reality for many families in Monroe County, and Family Promise is working to help these families achieve sustainable independence.

Family Promise is a nationwide organization that began 30 years ago in New Jersey. There are now more than 200 affiliates spanning 43 states helping families through a community-based response. In Monroe County, congregations provide temporary accommodations for homeless families in the evenings. During the day, Family Promise provides services at its day center, including case management, education and connection to resources, as well as shower facilities and transportation.

"While access to quality medical care is important for good health, Mayo Clinic Health System recognizes that social and economic factors often play an even greater role. That's why our commitment to the health of Monroe County residents extends beyond the walls of our facilities," said Kimberly Hawthorne, administrator at Mayo Clinic Health System. "Adequate housing is important to everyone, especially children. Mayo Clinic Health System is proud to support Family Promise of Monroe County in their mission to help homeless and low-income families achieve lasting stability and independence."

The Mayo Clinic Health System donation was earmarked for two large projects in 2019 – the installation of new showers at their day center and a 15-passenger van to transport families between the day center and host locations.

Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare, Sparta

Changing the Picture of Addiction

The young woman had overdosed three times the week Sandy Brekke heard her story. She had experienced abuse, family addiction, homelessness and abandonment. After hip surgery in her 20s, she found relief with opioids, drugs that eased her physical pain and the emotional pain she had been carrying.

When her prescription stopped, she turned to the street for drugs. She tried unsuccessfully to quit using on her own. She desperately did not want to be addicted.

"This issue affects all of us on some level," Sandy says. "Changing the picture of addiction is the call for the community to raise awareness and help people struggling with addiction."

While this woman continues to struggle with addiction, Sandy, a senior consultant with the Gundersen Health System Office of Population Health, and more than 100 community members in the Alliance to HEAL (Halting the Effects of Addiction Locally) are working to cut the supply of drugs in the area and show people that life is better without drugs.

Health systems, small non-profits, private businesses, law enforcement, school districts, local elected officials and many more are part of the Alliance to HEAL. Early success is encouraging:

- La Crosse County reported two fatal overdose deaths in 2018, down from 19 in 2016.
- The number of opioids prescribed at Gundersen dropped 31 percent in 2018; pills per prescription decreased 26 percent.
- Alliance to HEAL wants to cut treatment program placement from 30 days or more to 24 hours.

Visit alliancetoheal.com to learn more about this initiative.

Gundersen Health System, La Crosse

Hospital Adds End-of-Life Doulas to Hospice Program



Kathy Hosler, BRMH hospice volunteer and end-of-life doula holds Snickers, a therapy animal.

Black River Memorial Hospital (BRMH) provides hospice, homecare, palliative care, and home medical equipment at B-Home Services and Supplies. Programs offered to the community based out of B-Home include grief support, the We Honor Veterans program, a donor

fund specifically used for end of life wishes and many other services to help patients and their families at the end of life.

Recently, a few BRMH hospice volunteers received certification to serve as an end-of-life doula. An end-of-life doula provides non-medical care for people who are dying and act as a bridge between the patient and their family.

Having doulas as part of the team is a welcome addition to the hospice program. Dena Graff, B-Home Services and Supplies director said, “We currently have trained volunteers and doulas that will spend time with patients who don’t have their family with them at the end of their journey. They also support

caregivers. When a hospice patient is in their final days, a doula can stay with the patient for long periods of time where caregivers often cannot.”

An end-of-life doula can provide vigil sitting, respite care, planning, care coordination and massage. A doula can help with legacy projects such as putting together a collage of photos and keepsakes or completing a journal to give to loved ones. They will offer to write letters to family and friends to help resolve old issues, help a patient meditate, read, play music, or other activities to provide peace.

Kathy Hosler, a hospice volunteer, provides therapy animals if the patient desires them. She said, “Having a therapy animal near someone creates a very peaceful and calming environment. It actually helps release endorphins that can help relieve pain.”

Kathy and other hospice doulas agree caring for those who are dying is an incredible experience and a privilege.

Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls

St. Joseph's Focuses on Tobacco Cessation and Teen Vaping

In 2018, tobacco cessation and vaping among teenagers were raised as areas of concern by staff and community members alike.

Local schools wanted more information on the impact of teen vaping and community health representatives wanted a fresh approach to tobacco cessation as they felt that only focusing on health impacts of tobacco use was no longer effective.

In response, a team was developed to tackle the issue. The team included a physician, nurses, respiratory therapist, marketing department and a member of the administrative team.

The team met with the Patient and Family Advisory Council and invited ideas to tackle the issues. The council suggested going to the schools and speaking directly to the students about vaping and to tackle adult tobacco usage by highlighting the financial impact and getting to them through their kids – showing them what they could have if their parents quit tobacco.

The team conducted consumer research to identify the annual spend on tobacco products in its service area in 2017 plus an average spend per user. This value was compared to real-world alternatives like vacations, mortgage payments and video games (so the kids would understand.)

A light-hearted, interactive presentation including science experiments and a game show was given to students at four

local schools to share this information and discuss the known dangers of vaping. The presentations were well received by the students and the community and neighboring schools have reached out for the same presentation.

Gundersen St. Joseph's Hospital and Clinics, Hillsboro

Improving Health & Safety for Our Children

Vernon Memorial Healthcare (VMH) annually hosts VMH Farm and Home Safety Day Camp to area fourth grade children from seven elementary schools within the VMH service area. The purpose of the 100% free day camp is to help decrease trauma and increase awareness of environmental dangers that children within the service area may come in contact with.

The 2018 day camp held on May 2, hosted 266 children and 45 community members from local businesses that volunteered their time to teach students about electrical, fire, water, animal, first aid, chemical and grain, farm equipment, internet, gun and bike safety. Each station provided safety instruction and general education about potential dangers that can be found in the home or on a farm. Many of the presenters were able to discuss their firsthand accounts of living through dangerous events that happened at their home or farm.

Area teachers have praised this event for its realness and effectiveness, saying year after year their classes always leave with a broader knowledge and understanding of dangers that may exist. They have also reported that their students have often updated their parents on dangerous situations or possible scenarios that could occur in their home were able to create a safer and healthier environment to live in.

Vernon Memorial Healthcare sees this event as an opportunity to teach children safety and healthy choices, while also using it as a way to collaborate with community partners to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua

Medication Drop Boxes Protect Communities, Environment

Since installing its first medication drop boxes for the public in 2015, Gundersen Health System has helped protect the communities it serves by collecting and disposing of more than 35,225 pounds of pharmaceuticals.

“The misuse of pharmaceuticals is a growing problem and will continue to be for the foreseeable future,” says Eric Bashaw, manager, Gundersen Environmental Compliance. “Helping eliminate excess medications from households reduces the risk of diversion or misuse. It also ensures that the medications do not end up in landfills or our waterways. A healthy environment equals healthy people.”

Community response to the program has been overwhelming. What started as several drop boxes has grown to 10. In the past three months, more pharmaceutical waste has been collected than in the entire first year of the program.

Community members can use the drop boxes to safely get rid of prescription, over-the-counter and pet medications, medical ointments and lotions, and liquid medications in sealed containers. The items are then emptied from the drop boxes and transported to a specialized incinerator for disposal, all under Gundersen employee observation.

Needles, IV bags, infectious waste, thermometers, medicines from businesses, hydrogen peroxide, batteries, household chemicals, and cosmetics are not accepted in the boxes.



medication drop bin

“The drop boxes focus the public’s attention on their personal inventory of pharmaceuticals,” Bashaw says. “We are hopeful that eventually people will stop buying their medications and vitamins in bulk, which often leads to waste.”

Gundersen Health System, La Crosse

Teaching Safety

Coordinated by Tomah Health Community Outreach, nearly 900 people learned how to keep their family safe during the 17th annual Monroe County National Night Out in Tomah's Winnebago Park Aug. 6. The event included hands-on activities including a CPR demo by Tomah Memorial Hospital Community Outreach Health Educator Julie Anderson, RN.



Julie Anderson, RN gives a CPR demo

Earlier this year the Monroe County National Night Out was one of 33 organizations across the country recognized by the National Association of Town Watch.

Tomah Health, Tomah



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