The AHA’s Members in Action series highlights how hospitals and health systems are implementing new value-based strategies to improve health care affordability. This includes work to redesign the delivery system, manage risk and new payment models, improve quality and outcomes, and implement operational solutions.

**Overview**

Through community partnerships and research, New Ulm Medical Center (NUMC) is collaborating to prevent cardiovascular disease and improve the health status of local residents. This critical access hospital is part of Allina Health.

The Hearts Beat Back: Heart of New Ulm (HONU) aims to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of all 14,000 New Ulm-area residents through education, policy changes, available resources, initiatives and partnerships that empower people of all ages to take responsibility for their own health in a supportive environment.

The effort began in 2009 by the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation® (MHIF) and NUMC as a 10-year research project designed to reduce heart attacks. The project continues today as a community-owned health initiative focused on three areas: healthy lifestyles across the lifespan, behavioral health and substance use disorders.

**Impact**

Data from the first six years of HONU show the number of individuals with a blood pressure at goal increased by 8 percent among New Ulm adult residents ages 40 to 79 years. Furthermore, when the results of New Ulm were analyzed against an age and gender matched Minnesota comparison community, total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein-cholesterol, triglycerides and blood pressure all showed better management in New Ulm compared to the other community.

There was a nearly an 8 percentage point increase in those getting 150 minutes or more of moderate intensity activity and a near doubling of those meeting the goal to eat five or more fruits and vegetables per day with an 11 percent increase.

In addition, membership in the city-owned recreation center increased 60 percent, businesses and individuals relocated to New Ulm because of the community’s commitment to healthy lifestyles, and city leaders use health data when developing policies pertaining to recreation, transportation and education.

*Bike racks were installed across the city to encourage healthy lifestyles.*
Heart of New Ulm promotes healthier menu options at restaurants and community events.

This project is supported by a collaborative effort involving local organizations.