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## 2020 COMMUNITY BENEFITS REPORT



## WISCONSIN HOSPITALS CARE: Building Healthy Communities



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## WISCONSIN HOSPITALS CARE: BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

A Message from WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding



Wisconsin hospitals and health systems understand that the measure of a healthy community extends well beyond biometric data and quality care metrics. Civic engagement, shared experiences, collective problem solving, education and support for the less fortunate—these are the ways communities add value to the lives of their citizens. Serving our communities well means going out of your way to help others, knowing that a greater cause is served when we look out for one another. That is why Wisconsin's health care providers naturally seek, create or otherwise take advantage of every opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the people they have the privilege of serving.

This year's report on the community benefits realized as a result of investments, programs and initiatives enacted by Wisconsin hospitals and health systems includes a period of time that saw uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 throughout Wisconsin, which pushed our state's health system to its limits. Frontline health care workers have received widespread and well-deserved recognition for their heroic response to the pandemic. The measures adopted by Wisconsin's hospitals and health systems to care for our friends, neighbors and loved ones in the face of unprecedented challenges are remarkable, especially considering the strains rising case numbers and hospitalizations placed on their operations, finances and staffing. Wisconsin hospitals maintained their ability to treat both COVID and non-COVID patients throughout the pandemic by increasing capacity by more than 2,000 beds, creatively leveraging underutilized space, including ambulance garages—to handle patient overflows.

All the while, Wisconsin health care providers maintained strong community involvement, both within and outside their facilities, as the stories in this report attest. In fact, COVID reinforced the already strong bonds between Wisconsin hospitals and the communities they serve as collective action took root in cities, towns and villages across the state to support infected patients and their families and curtail virus spread. This heartening trend is reflected in a new community impact category we've added to this report related specifically to initiatives hospitals and health systems implemented in their communities centered around "Fighting COVID-19."

The intangible benefits of the community engagement stories in this report are beyond measure, as they reflect efforts by hospitals and their staff to connect with their neighbors at a truly human level. The financial contributions of Wisconsin hospitals and health systems to their communities are significant and quantifiable—totaling **more than \$1.9 billion** in community benefits and charity care in fiscal year 2019.

I invite you to learn more about the specific programs taking place in your communities to improve health and wellness by reading the inspiring stories in the following pages. And, new this year, we've created an interactive, online version of this report so that our members and stakeholders can view, celebrate and share the meaningful ways hospitals and health systems are enhancing the quality of life we all enjoy here in Wisconsin. Visit [wha.org/communitybenefits](https://wha.org/communitybenefits) to learn more.

Thank you to our members and to the many organizations and people who support our collective mission to provide high-quality, affordable and accessible health care to every community in Wisconsin.

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

Eric Borgerding,  
WHA President/CEO



## Community Benefit Fiscal Year 2019 Financial Summary

### Community Benefits

Charity Care at Cost	\$187,954,279
Medicaid Shortfalls	\$1,179,613,443
Losses on Other Public Programs	\$43,669,861
Subsidized Health Services	\$157,138,995
Nursing Home Losses	\$8,059,991

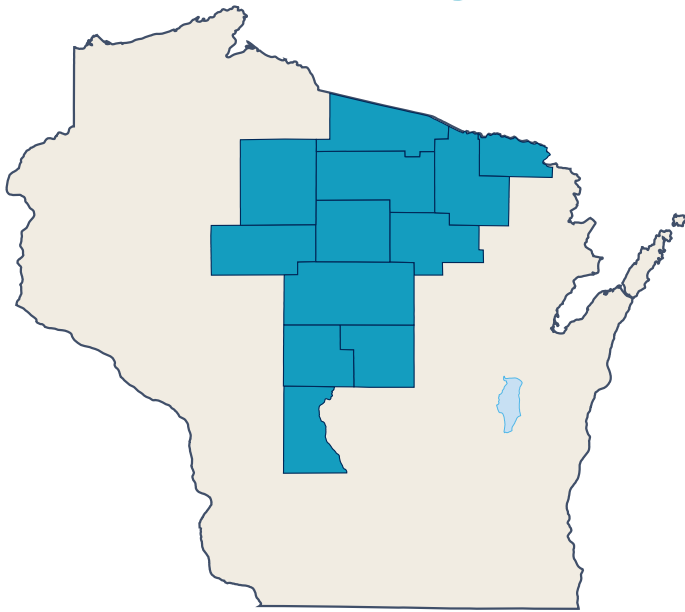
### Benefit Category

Community Health Improvement Services	
<i>Community Health Education</i>	\$26,538,666
<i>Community-Based Clinical Services</i>	\$12,745,381
<i>Health Care Support Services</i>	\$24,802,890
<i>Social &amp; Environmental Improvement Activities</i>	\$5,013,139
Total Community Health Improvement Services	\$69,100,076
Cash or In-Kind Donations	\$43,525,531
Loss on Health Professions Education/Workforce	\$269,754,397
Loss on Research	\$13,821,936
Community Building Activities	\$8,441,495
Community Benefit Operations	\$8,417,125

<b>Total Community Benefits*</b>	<b>\$1,989,497,129</b>
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\* WHA follows CHA Community Benefit Guidelines, which excludes Medicare shortfalls and bad debt expense from the community benefit calculation. In fiscal year 2019, the statewide estimate for Medicare shortfalls was \$2,644,757,259 and bad debt at cost was \$236,372,573.

# North Central Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:**  
**\$193,623,936**

## Charity Care

### Charity Care Program Improves Access to Care for Hundreds Annually

Nearly \$1.5 million and 355 individuals – those statistics represent the impact Mile Bluff Medical Center’s financial assistance program had during the 2019 fiscal year.

A top focus of the Mile Bluff organization is to continually improve the community’s access to medically necessary care. This sometimes involves removing barriers that keep people from seeking out health care in the first place – barriers such as financial burden.

By offering payment reductions and debt forgiveness through its charity care program, Mile Bluff makes it possible for patients to receive the care they need, despite their lack of ability to pay for that care on their own. It comes as no surprise then, that when patients receive assistance, Mile Bluff receives thanks.

“We get so many messages from patients who want to let us know how absolutely grateful they are to Mile Bluff for providing help,” commented Pam, a patient accounts specialist. “Two of my favorite notes of thanks from this past year are as follows.”

*“Thank you...without your help we would be in a very bad financial situation.”*

*“We are so thankful for Mile Bluff. Without the financial assistance we received, my wife and I would not be able to afford to both eat and pay other necessary bills.”*

In a society that often puts more value on getting ahead than helping others, it is refreshing to know that a lot of good is still done through the work of non-profit medical centers such as Mile Bluff.

**Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston**

## COVID-19 Efforts

### 2-1-1 Program Provides Information Lifeline During COVID-19 Pandemic

Ascension Wisconsin has been a longtime supporter of the United Way 2-1-1 program in central and northern Wisconsin.

From its original roots supporting Marathon County, the Wausau-based program has in recent years expanded to coordinate free, confidential information and referral services to the neighboring counties of Portage, Lincoln, Oneida and Vilas.

As the questions and concerns about COVID-19 spread, between January 1 and June 30, 2020, United Way’s 211 responded to 3,061 requests for help from Marathon County residents, providing 5,619 referrals to community services.

These services include, but are not limited to: tax preparation assistance, housing, food and meals, mental health and addiction services, COVID-19 related resources, utility assistance, and other basic needs and supportive services.

“211 has also been a vital part of our community’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Patti Shafto-Carlson, community benefit coordinator at Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital. “211 has been working closely with the Marathon County Health Department to ensure residents are getting up-to-date information about local and statewide numbers and trends.”

Funding from Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital at the onset of the pandemic enabled 211 to maintain staffing capacity in order to continue providing information and referral services to residents, as well as managing and maintaining resource information in the 211 database.

“This funding facilitated the need to increase local call center hours to help with the increase of calls at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the increased hours spent contacting individual programs to ensure the database accurately reflects changes in hours of operation and intake procedure due to COVID-19,” said Shafto-Carlson.

**Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital-Weston**

## Generosity and Innovation Bolster PPE Inventory for Health Care Workers

While there are many things unknown about COVID-19, one thing is certain – access to effective personal protective equipment (PPE) is vital for health care professionals on the front line.

Times of uncertainty often provide opportunities for creativity and innovation and Ascension Wisconsin is benefiting from these traits on many levels during the current pandemic.



*Associates from the Surgery Department at Ascension St. Michael's Hospital wearing face shields manufactured by CREATE Portage County*

“Our team has been diligently working to sustain our supply of PPE and the investigation of products from non-traditional suppliers has helped us fill some key needs during the management of this pandemic,” said Adam Trafton, vice president and chief resource officer for Ascension Wisconsin with The Resource Group, Ascension's resource and supply management organization.

Often these opportunities stem from already established relationships and that was the case for Ascension Wisconsin after connecting with Port Washington-based Allen Edmonds and CREATE Portage County in Stevens Point.

“After consulting with Ascension leaders from infection prevention and other functions to review and provide input, we were able to come up with a mask design that would bolster our supply of PPE,” said Trafton.

An agreement to provide as many as 25,000 masks a week was just the kind of inventory Trafton was looking for at a

time when a change in policy brought universal masking to all facilities across the state.

Meanwhile in Central Wisconsin, CREATE Portage County operates with a mission of accelerating creativity, connection and collaboration to advance vibrant and welcoming communities.

Executive Director Greg Wright leads the charge for the organization which has an IDEA center

equipped with 3D printers to allow residents of Stevens Point and beyond to invest in their creative ideas and expand entrepreneurship.

“We had done some research and found out there were people and organizations like ours supporting the healthcare industry using 3D printers and we knew we could do something similar,” said Wright.

After a similar product review to the innovation masks, CREATE mobilized its 3D army to create more than 3,000 face shields in short order.

“The support of our operations across the state has been humbling and we are grateful,” said Trafton. “We have benefited from countless donations from individuals and businesses that have enhanced our ability to protect our caregivers and the community.”

**Ascension St. Michaels Hospital, Stevens Point**

## RN Provides Spanish Translation

Izamar Scoles, registered nurse in the birthing center at Aspirus Medford Hospital, helped Aspirus translate important COVID-19 communication pieces into Spanish. These communication pieces varied from signage at the COVID-19 testing site to Facebook posts educating the community on how to stay safe to flyers posted at the entrances of Aspirus' hospital and clinics. Medford, WI has a large Spanish-speaking population and Iza's ability to provide translation services helped provide correct information more quickly to the community.



*Izamar Scoles, RN, speaking about why translating messages into Spanish is so important to her.*

**Aspirus Medford Hospital, Medford**

## Educational Initiative Helps Parents, Caregivers During Time of COVID

“Marshfield Children’s Cares for Kids” wanted to provide fun for Wisconsin kids while they were out of school and at home because of COVID-19.

So, time to help parents and caretakers who found themselves becoming teachers and entertainers.



*Physical activities were important to keep children active during COVID-19.*

A project was created to compile top-quality, interactive, educational activities since it was time to engage children in fun learning activities and help families stay happy, healthy and busy. Collaborators included the Center for Community Health Advancement (CCHA) and Marshfield Clinic Health System, working with Marshfield Medical Center’s Children’s Hospital and Marshfield Children’s.

Each week’s offering, uploaded to CCHA’s website, focused on five subject areas and provided hands-on activities for each subject daily - art, science, physical education, social and emotional learning, math, reading and writing, music and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

Live presentations were given three times weekly via CCHA’s Facebook page. Laura Zelenak, CCHA health educator, scheduled videos and helped presenters with setup and preparation. “We’ve shared educational and entertaining information with thousands of community members, highlighting talented people we have in this health system,” Zelenak said.

To make it truly interactive, families were encouraged to post picture/video comments or tag CCHA on social media to feature kids and their activities. Especially fun was to see science projects and drawings kids made, their dance moves and sports skills, learn about favorite books and more. Some photos and video comments submitted to CCHA’s social media pages were posted and families had a chance to see themselves featured.

**Marshfield Clinic Health System**

## Hospital's COVID-19 Efforts Keep Juneau County's Health Care Strong

When COVID-19 came on the scene, it turned health care upside-down. Medical experts were dealing with the unknowns of a new virus. Health care workers had to learn to adjust to information that changed from one moment to the next. The unexpected became the expected. It forced organizations like Mile Bluff Medical Center to shift the focus from long-term goals to crisis response.

Mile Bluff’s team rallied together to navigate the virus and the transformation brought with it. Safety protocols were enhanced, processes were added, new job functions were created, a respiratory care clinic was opened, and new services were offered – all to keep patients safe.

Staff members took time off or worked in areas they weren’t accustomed to. And although fear and anxiety among health care workers increased, it never got in the way of safely providing for the needs of the community. In fact, despite caring for sick individuals, Mile Bluff can proudly report that not one positive case of COVID-19 was connected to a spread of the virus within the organization.



*Mile Bluff’s team members took on new roles to keep patients safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. New services, including drive-up labs were offered.*

Mile Bluff is committed to providing compassionate and progressive care, improving the health and wellness of the community, and going beyond expectations in health care today and always. This mission is true whether life is ‘normal’ or there is a pandemic spreading across the state. Thankfully for the residents of the Juneau County area, the actions taken by Mile Bluff’s team during its response to COVID-19, preserved the organization’s long-term ability to care for the medical needs of the region.

**Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston**

## COVID-19 Support Fund Helps Northwoods Residents

The COVID-19 pandemic created disruptions in employment, education, food, housing and more, and Northwoods-area residents were not immune. However, they were able to benefit from a special community fund set up specifically to help during the pandemic.

Marshfield Clinic Health System and Security Health Plan established a \$400,000 COVID Support Fund to provide financial resources quickly to community organizations that could help address local needs because of the sharp increase in issues associated with COVID-19.



*A special COVID-19 fund helped Marshfield Medical Center-Minocqua area communities address food resources, especially through food pantries.*

In partnership with awarded organizations, this fund ensures individuals and families have food and can pay rent, teachers can teach and extra measures are taken to keep everyone safe.

In the Lakeland area surrounding Marshfield Medical Center-Minocqua, five fund recipients addressed food resources. Through the fund, Feed Our Rural Kids, Inc., and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Eagle River, focused on supplemental food programs like Weekend Backpacks and mobilizing volunteers to ensure all students and families could access school-provided meals.

The Lakeland Pantry in Arbor Vitae, Rhinelander Area Food Pantry and Vilas Food Pantry met increased demand for food while protecting consumers and volunteers through safety precautions and using personal protective equipment.

"COVID-19 has created unprecedented challenges for our communities and organizations working to improve health within them," said Jay Shrader, vice president of Community Health and Wellness, Marshfield Clinic Health System. "There is virtually no part of life that has not been touched by this. These funds were made available to help organizations quickly respond to new needs and a new way of operating."

**Marshfield Medical Center-Minocqua**

## Free Clinics

### Free heart, diabetes screenings lead to breast cancer diagnosis, recovery

Health care expenses can be overwhelming, especially for those without insurance. Fear of financial burden can lead patients to delay needed care, which can result in serious medical consequences.

To meet the needs of the uninsured, Mile Bluff Medical Center regularly hosts health fairs. The events offer patients free testing for blood pressure, blood sugar and hearing; and for a small fee, cholesterol checks are also provided. Attendees receive immediate results, and then meet with Mile Bluff health professionals who provide education about each patient's risks for various health conditions.

Catherine is one of the many individuals who takes advantage of these events. During one health fair, she disclosed that because she had no insurance, she hadn't visited her doctor in years. Upon learning this, the Mile Bluff team connected Catherine with the Wisconsin Well Woman Program. She was able to receive a free check-up and a screening mammogram – which led to a diagnosis of early-stage breast cancer. Catherine received treatment and is now a cancer survivor... all because she went to one of Mile Bluff's health fairs!

Catherine still attends Mile Bluff's events regularly. When she does, she is sure to remind the staff of how they saved her life. "I'm so grateful for the care I received at Mile Bluff," says Catherine. "Without them, I don't know where I would be."

Mile Bluff is proud to provide services that allow patients to focus on maintaining their wellness, rather than worrying about their ability to pay for medical care.

**Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston**

## Hospital-Supported Initiatives

### Ascension Wisconsin Northwoods Hospitals Increase Number of QPR Gatekeepers

More than 800 community members in Oneida and Vilas counties participated in QPR Suicide Prevention Training thanks to additional training sessions coordinated by Ascension Wisconsin Hospitals in Rhinelander, Woodruff and Eagle River.

QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer. As part of the training, participants learn the knowledge and skills to proactively interact with an individual who may be considering suicide.

Specifically, those who participated in the Gatekeeper Training gained the knowledge to:

- Know what behaviors/warning signs indicate someone might be at risk for suicide.
- Understand risk factors affecting those who attempt or complete suicide.
- Effectively communicate with someone who might be at risk for suicidal behavior and know how to refer that person to a mental health professional.
- Learn and access community resources available to assist individuals at risk for suicide and their families, friends, and coworkers.
- Learn about local and national resources for suicide prevention

“Just as people trained in CPR help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis,” said Heidi Pritzl, licensed clinical social worker with Ascension Koller Behavioral Health.

Pritzl says that participants were also given a three-month post training evaluation to assess impact.

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

## Farm to School Program Endures Pandemic

Ascension St. Michael's Hospital in Stevens Point has enjoyed a decades-long relationship with the Stevens Point Area YMCA as innovative partners with a common goal of improving the health and well-being of residents of Portage County.

With support from Ascension St. Michael's, the YMCA works cooperatively with area farmers and local businesses, Master Gardeners and volunteers, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the federal AmeriCorps program to implement and continue a successful Farm to School program.

“This program works to decrease childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating habits in students and increase access to and knowledge of local food sources,” said Margo Willard, Community Benefits Coordinator at Ascension St. Michael's. “Through early intervention and education, Farm to School is designed to improve the overall health and well-being of a community by establishing healthier eating habits and increasing physical activity.”

AmeriCorps volunteers reported that the goals set for the 2019-20 session were met, despite being cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stevens Point Area Farm to School was able to provide over 135 nutrition education lessons to over 550 students. In addition, they provided locally sourced food, nutrition education and activities at over 13 area community events, serving several thousand members of the community. The program also provided nearly 4,000 locally sourced snacks from over 30 different farmers. Lastly, over 500 pounds of produce were harvested from the YMCA gardens.



*Students participating in the Farm to School Program*

During Safer at Home, through a social media platform (@YMCAFarmtoSchool), virtual nutrition education and farm tours, healthy snack recipes and cooking lessons as well as gardening tips and resources were shared.

Students in the program gained a better understanding of the benefits of buying from local farmers, an introduction to a larger variety of produce and taught what participants can grow and how to grow it.

**Ascension St. Michael's Hospital, Stevens Point**

## Summer Fun Project Packs

Hospitals that are active participants in vibrant community coalitions are in the best position to respond to community health needs during public health emergencies. Those hospitals are able to pivot from their planned community health improvement efforts to alternatives.

In rural Lincoln County, Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital and Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital are members of numerous coalitions focused on improving community members' health – mental and physical.

One of those coalitions – the Healthy Minds Lincoln County Coalition – responded to the increased home-centric family life with creativity: Summer Fun Project Packs.



*Summer Fun Packs Supported by Ascension Good Samaritan and Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital*

“Finding ways to connect and have fun together can help youth and families manage stress and enjoy the increased home time,” said Jane Bentz, Director of Community Outreach for Ascension Good Samaritan. “The packs are filled with youth-family educational activities that touch on mental health, nutrition and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). Craft and reading activities, along with supplies to complete the activities, are also included.”

The Healthy Minds Lincoln County Coalition partnered with Kinship of Tomahawk, T.B. Scott Library, Tomahawk Library and the UW-Madison Division of Extension 4-H program to provide a pack in May. The response was so overwhelmingly positive, the group created a set of packs for each month during the summer.

**Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital-Merrill and  
Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital-Tomahawk**

## **Gilman Community Health & Wellness Center**

The Village of Gilman has a population of just more than 400 people. However, a need for access to physical fitness resources was evident. The goal, as defined by the planning committee, was to provide a readily accessible, updated fitness center and offerings to promote behaviors and education that would inspire individuals to take responsibility for improving their own health and well-being.

“Our idea started as, let's get some new benches, squat racks, dumbbells, and barbells, whatever it may be. We got on a phone call with a representative from Aspirus,” said Jon Hess, principal/athletic director, Gilman School District. “That helped us open our eyes and develop a vision of how can we

not only impact our students, but how can we impact our community itself.”

In order to achieve this goal, the planning committee developed a comprehensive health and wellness program that provides opportunities for individuals of all ages and walks of life, including weight training, cardiovascular training, fitness classes, and educational presentations from health experts. The health and wellness programs are free of charge for community members.

“Whether you are student, staff or a community member, you can come here to work on your level of fitness,” Hess said. “Whether that is strength training, cardiovascular training, socialization and participating in a fitness class and at the same time, educating people about healthy lifestyles.

Memorial Member Association (MMA) contributed \$125,000 toward The Gilman Community Health & Wellness Center project. MMA was formed at the time of the unification of the Medford hospital and clinics with Aspirus. MMA represents the community's 50% share in the health care organization. It is a separate entity from Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics and uses its proceeds to fund healthy initiatives in the community.

**Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics**

## **The Perfect Partnership - Everyone Benefits from Meaningful Work**

In 2015, Aspirus Riverview Hospital and Opportunities Development Centers, Inc. (ODC), formed a powerful partnership when, together, they launched Project SEARCH. What is Project SEARCH? Project SEARCH is an international nine-month program that provides training and education leading to integrated employment for youth with disabilities.

Aspirus Riverview understood that all individuals benefit from meaningful work. With a mission that includes a pledge to “strengthen the communities we serve” Aspirus Riverview was



*Project Search student assisting in Human Resources*

honored when asked to serve as the business site for Project Search. As the business site, Aspirus Riverview agreed to provide dedicated classroom space and internships throughout the hospital so students could learn important job skills to make them more marketable.

Aspirus Riverview and ODC worked with hospital directors to develop internships job descriptions. Internships were provided from every department including pharmacy, lab, imaging, housekeeping, and food services. Hospital directors also agreed to supervise each student with support from a job coach. Each Project SEARCH student would be given the opportunity to rotate through three hospital internships during the nine-month program.

In September 2015, the inaugural class of Aspirus Riverview students arrived. Clad in matching royal blue polos, the students embraced the opportunity to learn. After a few weeks in the classroom learning hospital policies and procedures, they were assigned to various internships, where they quickly captured the hearts and admiration of the hospital staff. Not only were the interns happy, they found every job meaningful and taught hospital employee that being able to work is a gift.

Since 2015, five groups of students have gone through the Aspirus Riverview Project SEARCH program. Many of the students found work in the community after graduating from the program. In addition, Aspirus Wausau Hospital also became a Project Search business site in 2018.

Aspirus Riverview and Wausau Hospitals recognize that the Project SEARCH students don't have disabilities, they really have "unique" abilities. What could be more meaningful than helping each student find their own career success?

[Aspirus Riverview Hospital, Wisconsin Rapids](#)

## Farmers Market Helps People Eat Healthy While Supporting the Community



*The farmers market in Park Falls, coordinated by Flambeau Hospital, gives area residents healthy food options.*

Each week from May to October, Price County-area residents support local farmers while also stocking up on whole foods that support a healthy diet.

Flambeau Hospital in Park Falls coordinates that community's farmers market, now in its 10th season.

The confluence of economic development, improved community nutrition and, in most seasons, an intergenerational social experience makes the market an asset for public health.

The 2020 season included many precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the pandemic underscored a renewed value in home cooking, food preservation and desire to shop in the safety of the open-air market. These conditions allowed the event to flourish.

The market uses cash transactions; a system of gift certificates, purchased by others and used at any vendor's table; and the state FoodShare program, which already surpassed last season's total deposits by 191%.

The market continues to offer an educational component of seasonal recipes and food storage information shared at the event, in the local newspaper and on social media.

Linda Daubner, lead organizer and a Marshfield Clinic Health System certified registered dietitian and diabetes educator, said, "the market's success centers on participation of a dedicated group of vendors who range in age from their 30s to their 90s. Each week, an average of 10 farms support a steady flow of customers who appreciate items that complement our local grocery stores. The market offers more people access to healthier food choices and strengthens our community, too."

[Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls](#)

## Connecting Patients to Recovery Services

Three Bridges Recovery (TBR) and Aspirus recently launched a partnership to provide recovery services to the Aspirus system which includes Wood, Portage, Marathon, Langlade, and Taylor counties. TBR aids patients who enter the Aspirus emergency departments because they are experiencing a substance overdose or substance withdrawal. The intent is to accept the patient where they are, or are not, in their recovery process. The goal is to advocate for each patient and his/her specific needs. What makes TBR unique is their ability to provide peer-based services. Each coach and peer support specialist have suffered through addiction and recovery, so he/she is able to relate to the patient on a different level than someone who hasn't wrestled with addiction.

In the last six weeks, TBR has responded to the Aspirus Wausau Hospital emergency department and has successfully been able to get six people into detox treatment. Due to the economic and emotional toll of COVID-19, substance use relapses have increased nearly 120%. This speaks to the emergent need that exists and the necessity to react and

respond immediately to help those who are suffering from a substance use disorder. From the moment the TBR coach connects with the patient in emergency department, the coaching relationship begins and continues throughout the patient's journey to recovery. The TBR coach helps the person with goal planning, establishing primary care, getting a job, connecting them to resources and modeling healthy lifestyles to encourage them to be the best version of themselves and achieve their concept of success.

Over a year ago a TBR coach met with a patient in the Aspirus Wausau Hospital emergency department. The man had overdosed three times in one day. The first two times he would not agree to medical transport to the emergency department. The third time a TBR coach was able to meet with him. The man said, "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired." This statement resonated with the coach because the coach had similar feelings when he was a substance user. The man had two small children and a wife. Upon meeting with the peer, he was connected to detox services. From detox he was able to go to a treatment center and upon leaving the treatment center, TBR had an aftercare plan in place. He soon gained employment, got a reliable vehicle and was the father he had dreamed he should be. Still to this day he is clean and sober and doing well.

TBR appreciates the support they receive from Aspirus. This has been a successful partnership that is addressing a significant issue in the Aspirus communities.

**Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau**

## Addressing Opioids

Marshfield Medical Center recognized the importance of developing a policy to provide guidance on prescribing practices for acute and chronic pain management opioids.

This recognition was elevated to a Marshfield Clinic Health System-level effort, which resulted in the Health System implementing policy and systems change focused on using and prescribing opioids in hospital and clinic settings.

The Health System, in February 2019, revised and accepted The Opioid Prescribing Policy. Its scope and purpose was based on key elements of the State of Wisconsin Medical Examining Board policy on opioid prescribing for non-cancer pain.

The goal was to minimize potential risk to all patients and individuals who may be around patients who could be intentionally or unintentionally exposed to opioid medications. Providers are encouraged to implement best practices for responsible prescribing.

A critical part of implementing and sustaining systems change with opioid prevention within the Health System was ensuring the continual active participation of Marshfield Medical Center staff in community coalitions.

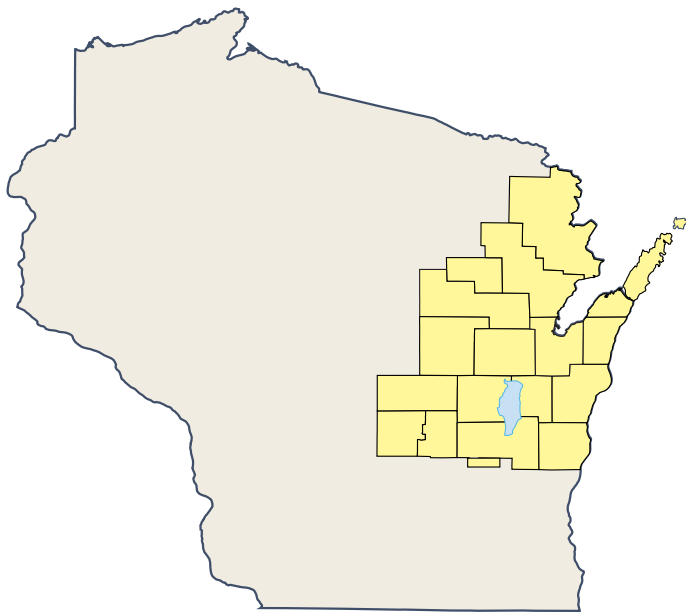


*A pharmacist provides guidance regarding an opioid prescription*

Staff participated in the Wood County Drug Task Force, Alcohol Workgroup, Marijuana Workgroup, AOD Prevention Partnership and AOD Steering Committee, helping with educational presentations, community events as well as policy, environmental and systems change.

**Marshfield Clinic Health System**

# Packerland Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:**  
**\$288,642,292**

## Charity Care

### Coping with Cancer Uninsured

In 2019, Sara\* immigrated to Wisconsin with the help of her brother. She was excited to reunite with her family, help with her brother's business, and reside in Manitowoc as a legal permanent resident.

Shortly after she arrived, Sara was experiencing abdominal pain and went to the emergency room. A few days later, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, clinical stage 3C.

There was one thing Sara didn't have and that was health insurance.

Sara immediately applied for Medicaid. She found out that she only qualified for emergency Medicaid benefits since she had not lived in the United States as a legal resident for five years. Not having health

insurance, Sara felt much uncertainty, anxiety and stress regarding her cancer diagnosis and treatment.

A financial counselor at Holy Family Memorial shared information about Holy Family Memorial's Community Care program and helped Sara apply for the program. Sara was able to receive a 100% adjustment on her services and was able to start her chemotherapy treatment.

\*Patient name has been changed.

[Holy Family Memorial, Manitowoc](#)

## When Coverage Doesn't Pay Prior Medical Expenses

Edwin reached out to the Financial Advocate at Aurora Medical Center-Bay Area in December 2019 asking for financial help.

When the hospital's Financial Advocate worked with him at that time, Edwin indicated he did not have insurance. Through a financial assessment, the Advocate discovered that he did have some coverage through Medicare Part A but that it didn't work the same way Medical Part B works.

In July 2020, Edwin added the Medicare Part B to his coverage but would have to pay back the Part B premiums for the months he did not have the coverage. This requirement almost works like a "penalty" for not taking Part B when Edwin originally began Part A coverage. This was new information to the Financial Advocate, and she filed this information in her memory so that she could share this with future patients she worked with. In addition, Edwin's coverage would not cover all the expenses he already incurred.

In the end, although Edwin needed a lot of assistance from the Advocate, he was willing to do whatever he needed to get the help felt he so desperately needed. Following a financial assessment, the Advocate was able to Edwin get approval for a financial hardship program, a payment plan for some past expenses, and eventually, Medicaid to cover any future medical expenses he may incur.

Edwin was grateful for all the help he received, and his experience was a reminder for the Advocate about why she loves the work she does.

[Aurora Medical Center – Bay Area, Marinette](#)

## A Helping Hand When Children Become Young Adults

Most parents want all the best things for their children: the best education, the best opportunities, and when they are ill, the best care. As children grow into young adults, a parent's ability to support them changes when children become more independent and responsible for their own well-being. But what happens when children age out of eligibility for medical coverage under their parent's insurance but haven't found replacement coverage before falling ill?

That's exactly what happened to Jeremy.

Jeremy arrived at the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora BayCare Medical Center and was admitted to the hospital due to a severe illness. His mother, who accompanied him to the hospital, was upset because Jeremy had just recently become ineligible for coverage under her insurance plan due to his age, yet he couldn't afford coverage through his employer.



Seeing mom in tears as she tried to help her son figure out how to pay for Jeremy's care, our hospital requested the Financial Advocate's help.

When she arrived at Jeremy's room, she was able to work with Jeremy to complete a financial assessment. Based on the information Jeremy provided, the counselor was able to approve him for approval through the Aurora Helping Hand Financial Assistance Program, meaning 100% of the care he received in the hospital would be covered at no cost to him.

When mom heard of Jeremy's approval, she was elated, "From one parent to another, I cannot thank you enough for what you've been able to do for my son."

**Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay**

## **A Helping Hand When There's Too Much to Handle Alone**

Amelia, a single mother raising three young boys, works full time for a temp agency. Although she works 40+ hours per week, the agency doesn't offer insurance. She applied for Badger Care but was denied because her earnings disqualified her. She tried to purchase insurance through the Market Place to purchase her own insurance, but quickly discovered that she needed to wait for open enrollment.

After weeks of severe pain, she drove herself to the Emergency Department (ED) at the Aurora Medical Center in Manitowoc County. Upon examination a mass was revealed, which

required further testing. And that's when Amelia became even more concerned, because she did not have resources to pay for the tests.

One of our financial advocates met with Amelia and helped her complete a financial assessment. Following the assessment, the Advocate informed Amelia that she was approved for a 100% discount on her care through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program.

Amelia felt immediate emotional relief. The approval for financial assistance lifted her financial worries, allowing her to focus on more important things, like her physical well-being.

**Aurora Medical Center in Manitowoc County, Two Rivers**

## **A Note of Thanks for a Helping Hand**

At Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh, it's our mission to help our community members live well. That means helping them achieve their best health in every area of their lives – from physical and emotional health to financial health as well. Aurora Helping Hand Patient Assistance Program exists to support patients who need care but are experiencing financial barriers. Notes from our patient's sums this up best.

Here's what one patient wrote to our hospital's Financial Advocate after receiving approval for support through our Helping Hand Program:

"You provided me with so much help in my time of need! I am so thankful and grateful for your monetary help!"

I relocated to Oshkosh, WI last year from another state. I'm going through a divorce and living on a very tight budget. For the first time in my life, I was uninsured and unable to find any aid.

This program has truly been a blessing!"

#### Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh

### A Helping Hand When Major Accidents Occur at Home

It happened so fast; he doesn't even recall how.

Joseph was outside cutting the grass like he did every week, all summer long. Somehow in this process, he had fallen, injured his foot and parochially amputated his toe. Thankfully, his wife was home and immediately took him to the Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center Emergency Department (ED). Joseph received an emergency surgery but did require a second surgery, which needed to be completed after his foot healed from the initial procedure.

At the time of his accident, Joseph and his wife were without insurance, living on a fixed income, and were unsure how they would afford to pay for all the care Joseph required.

That's when the hospital's Financial Advocate reached out.

During a financial assessment, the Advocate determined Joseph was over income for Medicaid. However, Joseph did qualify for a 100% discount on all the care he already received and follow-up care for the next thirty days through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program.

When the Advocate called Joseph to share the news, there was immediate silence on the other end of the call, a large sigh.

Joseph responded, "I can't believe it. Thank you so much for your help. I just can't believe it."

Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, Sheboygan

### COVID-19 Efforts

### COVID-19: Bringing Care Beyond Traditional Walls

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many innovative ways to ensure the physical and mental health needs of individuals and families continue to be met. Not only have these creative solutions unfolded within hospital and clinic walls, but in Agnesian HealthCare's case, it has also quickly transpired outside of those walls.

For many years, Agnesian HealthCare - as a member of SSM Health - has had a strong collaboration with the Fond du Lac

County Health Department. That longstanding partnership has blossomed into some fruitful experiences that have ensured that the most vulnerable in our communities receive COVID-19 testing and follow-up care.

Reaching Fond du Lac's Hispanic population emerged as an essential need thanks to a partnership with the health department and Holy Family Catholic Community Parish. Working with the church's Hispanic priests and health department interpreters, extensive promotion of a free COVID-19 testing site was completed and Agnesian HealthCare's Fond du Lac Regional Clinic offered testing at an offsite location convenient for Hispanic residents.

"We took the clinic to them," according to Dawn Vandenberg, regional director of Mission Integration with SSM Health. "Holy Family helped us pave the way and the health department donated the test kits. Collectively, we were able to reduce fear in receiving a COVID-19 test by reaching outside our walls and going directly to this underserved population. This first encounter will help us continue to build relationships and trust with this community especially among the undocumented."

Agnesian HealthCare and its partners have also responded to other onsite screenings including an area business with immigrant workers and a low-income housing apartment complex where many residents would not have been able to physically access this critical testing process. More than 100 residents of this complex were visited by a Fond du Lac Regional Clinic nurse insuring that no one was left behind. In particular, those whose mental, emotional and social conditions put them on the margins of society.

"Our dedicated team of providers have demonstrated a tremendous dedication to taking care of our people, keeping them safe," says Kathy Luedtke, Agnesian HealthCare director of Clinic Services. "It's important that we do everything we can to make those in need within our communities have better lives."

Agnesian HealthCare, a member of SSM Health, Fond du Lac

### Working with Area Organizations, Offering Support During Pandemic

Since March 2020, ThedaCare has been on a thoughtful, focused path to prepare for the impact of COVID-19 and provide our patients with safe, coordinated care. Throughout the pandemic, it has become clear that at times, the care our communities need extends beyond our hospital walls. Leaders, team members and volunteers from ThedaCare have partnered with organizations in our community to support those living in Northeast and Central Wisconsin with resources to help respond to COVID-19.

In April, local health organizations, officials and community leaders called on residents to maintain their active role in slowing the spread. ThedaCare and Ascension Wisconsin, in conjunction with public health officials and community leaders, launched Be Safe Wisconsin to encourage community members' ongoing commitment to flattening the curve.

Be Safe Wisconsin asked residents to practice safe behaviors including:

- Wearing a facemask when in public.
- Practicing good hygiene, including hand washing and sanitizing.
- Avoiding touching their face.
- Disinfecting frequently used items and surfaces, including mobile devices.
- Remaining at least 6 feet apart from others.



The effort has a dedicated website – [BeSafeWisconsin.org](https://BeSafeWisconsin.org) – where residents can take the pledge, sign up for updates,

download social media graphics for sharing and access local resources from Be Safe partners such as online symptom checkers, community hotlines, articles and more.

Since April, Be Safe Wisconsin has led community conversations, updating the public about the situation of the virus in Wisconsin, and offering suggestions and partnerships that help our local response.

Be Safe Wisconsin has grown from a dozen original partners to more than \*\*\*\*. Some partners include: Ascension Wisconsin, Bergstrom Automotive, Calumet County Public Health, City of Oshkosh, City of Neenah, Community Foundation of the Fox Valley Region, Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, Outagamie County, ThedaCare, United Way Fox Cities and Winnebago County.

Be Safe Wisconsin serves as a unified resource to area residents to stay updated on the latest precautions to take to be safe and reduce the spread of infections. To learn more, visit [BeSafeWisconsin.org](https://BeSafeWisconsin.org).

[ThedaCare, Neenah](#)

## Helping Kids and Families Manage Through COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges to everyone in our communities, especially our most vulnerable community members, our children. Children's Wisconsin used its communication channels, blog and social media channels

to connect with patients and families on available community resources, the impact of COVID-19 and MIS-C on kids and families, as well as provide guidance to parents and caregivers as they faced complex decisions regarding summer camps, sports, back-to-school and more. Children's also quickly scaled up their capacity to use technology both in their facilities and in patients' homes to help families safely and conveniently access the virtual care they needed.

Children's is very grateful to its volunteers, donors and corporate partners who helped make sure that all patients and clients and their families who visit Children's are able to be provided a cloth face mask. Once they were able to begin safely resuming inpatient procedures and surgeries, Children's Wisconsin began instituting testing all patients for COVID-19 and making sure adequate PPE was available to support their procedure. Some of our Fox Valley area patients had planned surgeries at our Milwaukee campus. Instead of having them drive down to Milwaukee, their Fox Valley staff facilitated pre-procedure COVID-19 tests for families, saving them hours of drive time for the brief test and allowed parents and caregivers to miss less work time. Children's providers across the system are proud to continue providing the best and safest care for kids in Wisconsin.

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

## Coping with COVID Challenges

The phrase "It takes a village" is true about so many things. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is certainly one of them. No one organization can tackle it alone.

Since its inception 121 years ago, Holy Family Memorial (HFM) has been dedicated to the health and wellbeing of its community. That did not waver when the pandemic started, nor has it in the long months since.

In the early days of the pandemic, planning with local public health and other health care entities was at the forefront of activities. While cases were few, emotions and fear ran high. Together with these groups, HFM developed a plan to share accurate information with their community. They engaged local media outlets and provided information to educate the public and offered their staff as the source for honest, accurate local content. HFM also worked with regional organizations to ensure a cohesive continuum of care and message was available throughout northeastern Wisconsin.

HFM also partnered with local health care organizations to offer mass community COVID-19 testing to the public in spring 2020. Since then, HFM has continued to make testing available, adjusting schedules as needed. As volumes in the county are now rising much more rapidly, HFM continues to be fluid in its response.

The challenges of COVID-19 go beyond illness to mental health, children feeling adrift with school changes, the challenges of isolation and more. To help combat these concerns, HFM created “Coping with COVID,” a series of videos designed to help individuals cope with the challenges of our COVID-19 world. The videos are available on the hospital website and social media. They have been shared with local schools to provide support for their families.

COVID-19 also brought challenges to skilled nursing facilities. HFM worked with local facilities to ensure the continuum of care was uninterrupted for their residents, assist with testing when needed, and provide transportation when other local resources were temporarily unavailable.

HFM also provided N95 respirators to Holy Family Convent to help its sponsoring sisters address the emerging needs of COVID-19 within their convent walls.

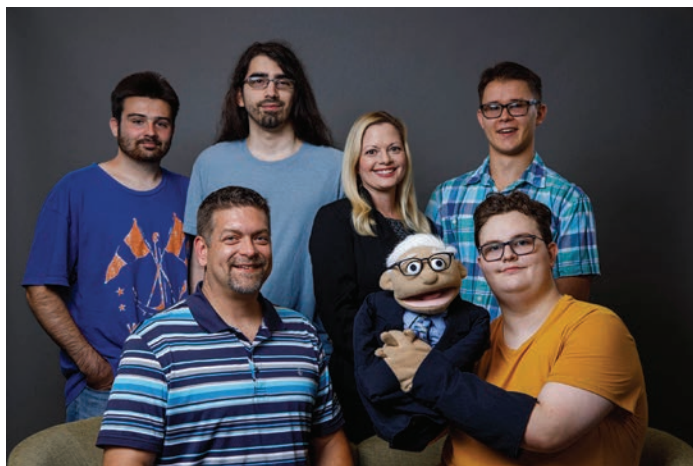
Recognizing that addressing COVID-19 in Wisconsin has really just begun, HFM will continue to address the COVID needs of the community with God’s guidance.

**Holy Family Memorial, Manitowoc**

## ***Hospital-Supported Initiatives***

### **Building Business Skills, Confidence Through Creativity**

There’s a familiar face - but slightly different - at Agnesian HealthCare’s Treffert Center and its Leaders in Creative Media team. For those who love Jim Henson’s Muppets, this new face has some hefty goals - to further share the incredible teachings of Darold Treffert, MD, an internationally respected researcher in autism, hyperlexia, savant syndrome and related conditions.



*Agnesian HealthCare's Treffert Center Leaders in Creative Media team*

Meet Dr. Treffert, the puppet. Thanks to funding from the Agnesian HealthCare Foundation, the Treffert Center Leaders in Creative Media team now has the computer, software and related equipment to create children’s shows with the Dr.

Treffert puppet sharing the message around neurodiversity and the potential within all of us.

“While creating these short films, individuals on the autism spectrum will have the opportunity to develop meaningful work skills, self-esteem and confidence,” says Tara Geier, a Treffert Center behavioral analyst. “Creating and producing videos is a marketable skill and one that our leadership team members have already demonstrated as a particular ‘Island of Genius’ for them.”

Using the Dr. Treffert puppet, educational information is shared with children, as well as content for videos to expand accessibility to Dr. Treffert’s great work and knowledge.

“This project demonstrates the continuity of care for our autism services across the lifespan,” according to Bryan Mischler, MSW, psychotherapist. “We focus on our patients’ strengths while teaching needed life skills, independence and job skills. Working as a team, we will find a meaningful way to leverage their high interests and skills to help others, as well as themselves.”

**Agnesian HealthCare, a member of SSM Health, Fond du Lac**

### **Aurora’s Suboxone Clinic Addresses a Significant Community Health Need**

According to our hospital’s most recent Community Health Needs Assessment, the rate of age-adjusted opioid-related hospital encounters was 311.4 per 100,000 population and drug use ranked among the top five health issues for Brown County.

It’s been two years since we opened our suboxone clinic, located in our Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Center. Although some community members were skeptical at first, the overall response to the clinic has been overwhelmingly positive since it’s opening.

Many of the clinic’s patients endured multiple overdoses, ICU stays, prison time, and homelessness before their first encounter with the clinic. Through specialized care and overall wellness support, the clinic’s providers have watched many of their patients become sober, get a job, enroll in school, secure safe housing, regain custody of their kids, and live a stable life. Many patients have voiced that the clinic saved their life and feel like the team caring for them is part of their family. They are thankful for the opportunity to build a new life.

Not only have Aurora patients gained access to a care team who specializes in providing effective treatments and dignified care, other community members have gained access too. Through established relationships with other addiction clinics including Clean Slate, Bellin, Comprehensive Treatment Center and Libertas we have been able to collaborate on patient

cases and tap into specialized AODA therapy and intensive outpatient services when needed, ensuring appropriate care based on each individual's needs.

In 2019, 82 patients were treated through 386 visits at the clinic.

### Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay

## Bellin Cardiologist Walks his Talk with "Lambeau Lap"

You've heard of the "Lambeau Leap." But do you know about the "Lambeau Lap"?

The Lambeau Lap is the creation of Dr. Rahul Verma of Bellin Health Cardiology Associates. It started in 2019 with Dr. Verma's concept to host a weekly walk in the Titledown District, adjacent to Lambeau Field. The goal? Help community members improve heart health by getting into a walking routine, thereby addressing a key community health needs assessment priority — physical activity, obesity and nutrition.



*Dr. Rahul Verma of Bellin Health Cardiology Associates is walking his talk with the Lambeau Lap, the free community walking program he started to encourage physical activity.*

"As the official health care provider of the Green Bay Packers, we have a unique relationship with the team," Verma said. "We're very much aligned on the importance of good health."

Each Wednesday morning, participants gather at Bellin Health Titledown Sports Medicine and Orthopedics for a 1.4-mile trek in the shadows of historic Lambeau Field — with Dr. Verma leading the way. After a pandemic-induced hiatus, the event returned this summer with new masking and distancing precautions in place.

All are welcome to participate in the free event. While the total distance is 1.4 miles, Dr. Verma tells participants to do whatever portion of that distance is comfortable for them.

As a cardiologist, Dr. Verma knows the importance of exercise.

"Walking is one of the single best things you can do to improve your health," he said. "All you really need is a pair of shoes and a little motivation. The Lambeau Lap group provides that impetus in a fun, easygoing setting that motivates participants to make movement a part of their daily lives."

### Bellin Health, Green Bay

## Caring for the Whole Person - Mind, Body and Spirit

Based on the data presented and the prioritization process of the community stakeholders, mental health was one of three priorities selected in our hospitals' Community Health Needs Assessment. Ascension Wisconsin is a member of two Tri-County Regional coalitions — Prevent Suicide-Fox Cities (formerly Zero Suicide) and the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Advisory Committee.

To better understand how the emergency department is part of a comprehensive, system-wide approach to suicide care, 45 emergency department associates from Ascension St. Elizabeth, Ascension Mercy and Ascension Calumet Hospitals received Zero Suicide training. Ninety-five percent of those trained indicated they had a better understanding of the emergency department's role in suicide care.

Ascension Wisconsin leaders participated in the QPR advisory and QPR leadership teams to help bring QPR training to Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago Counties. Both teams have added additional members to strengthen the group and make a bigger impact and reach more residents. In FY20, 540 people were trained in the Tri-County region through 38 QPR Gatekeeper trainings. Seventy-nine percent of all QPR gatekeeper training attendees in the Tri-County area reported they feel confident in asking the important questions to recognize a suicide crisis and understood how and where to find help for a person in need.

In addition to staff training, Ascension Wisconsin hospitals and foundations in the region funded additional mental health organizations and initiatives in the Fox Valley in FY20.

**Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth (Appleton),  
Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus (Oshkosh),  
Ascension Calumet Hospital (Chilton)**

## Making Healthy Happen

Good nutrition, physical activity, and a healthy body weight are essential parts of a person's overall health and well-being. In our hospital's most recent Community Health Needs Assessment, physical activity and nutrition ranked among the top five health issues for Marinette and Menominee Counties.



*Team members encouraged community members to get active and “make healthy happen” at the 2019 Waterfront Festival Run/Walk.*

To address this in 2019, we:

- Financially supported the physical education program for the Marinette, Menominee, Peshtigo, and Crivitz school districts. This support provided students with access to a healthcare provider with whom they can talk to about their health, ensuring that they are in a good condition to play their sport, and to help with early identification of any health conditions that may not have been otherwise found. We also completed 80 free school physicals for high school students.
- Helped organize and sponsored the Hodge Run, the LeowStrong Bike Ride, the Caring Hearts Walk, and the Waterfront Festival Run/Walk, which benefitted more than 1,000 community members who turned out to exercise.
- Financially supported and provided volunteers for the YMCA Healthy Youth Program and the YMCA Healthy Kids Day in April.
- Helped facilitate the Family Fun Day for Garfield and Park Elementary Schools, which encouraged movement for the whole family.

Through these events, sponsorships and other outreach and education efforts, we encourage our community members to live well.

#### **Aurora Medical Center-Bay Area, Marinette**

### **Helping Students Learn About Healthy Nutrition, Physical Activity**

We know that the social determinants of health have a tremendous impact on children’s health and well-being, including their ability to eat healthy, nutritious foods and participate in adequate physical activity. In Wisconsin, approximately 14 percent of youth ages 10 to 17 have obesity and nearly one-third of high school students are either overweight or obese. Less than a quarter of Wisconsin high

schoolers report getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Sadly, children with obesity are at a higher risk for other chronic health conditions and diseases, are more often bullied and teased, and are more likely to suffer from social isolation, depression and lower self-esteem.

Children’s Wisconsin, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, has created innovative e-learning programs that allow us to partner with schools statewide to help deliver important health information students need to grow up safe and healthy.

Through a combination of free online and classroom activities, Mission: Health helps students in K5 through 8th grades learn how to establish healthy habits, increase physical activity, eat right and feel good about their bodies. Mission: Health aligns with Wisconsin and National Health Education Standards and can be used as a stand-alone health program or integrated into existing curriculum. Students in a dozen Fox Valley areas schools learn: how to choose healthy foods and beverages, physical activities they enjoy, ways to develop and maintain a positive body image, and how food and physical activity impact the body.

#### **Children’s Wisconsin-Fox Valley, Appleton**

### **Door Community Child Development Center Opens with Support from Medical Center and Other Community Partners**

The Door Community Child Development Center is located in Sturgeon Bay’s former childcare center, the Barker Child Development Center, which was shuttered in March due to the coronavirus pandemic, and permanently closed at the beginning of July.

The quick reopening of Sturgeon Bay’s primary childcare facility is the result of weeks of hard work by the Barker Center’s former director, Alexis Fuller, and the combined efforts of Door County Medical Center and the Sturgeon Bay YMCA. The Door Community Child Development Center building, which is owned by the YMCA, will now be leased by Door County Medical Center.



*The Door Community Child Development Center*

“This opportunity is the result of Alexis’ many years of leadership in childcare programs working for the YMCA’s Barker Center program,” notes Door County Medical Center CEO Brian Stephens, adding, “But, this also couldn’t have been possible without the YMCA partnership on the lease of the building, as well as their very generous donation in equipment and supplies to ensure a successful opening and operation of the center.”

“Child Development Centers are so much more than babysitting; they are a safe haven for children to be themselves, have a sense of belonging, learn new skills, and grow lifelong friendships. They are a home away from home,” says Fuller. “The past few months without a childcare center in Sturgeon Bay have certainly created a void in the community. During a time when so much is unknown, and there is so much fear, when it’s difficult to hide these things from our children, they have not been able to go to their home away from home.”

“Parents,” Fuller points out, “should be able to have a career, and do what they love, without first calculating if it makes sense with the cost of childcare.”

**Door County Medical Center, Sturgeon Bay**

## HFM Partners with CORE Treatment Services to Serve Community AODA Needs



*The ribbon cutting of the new CORE Treatment Services, Inc., new Alcohol and Other Drugs of Abuse (AODA) facility on the HFM Medical Center campus.*

All around us we see stories of drug and alcohol abuse and the devastation it leaves in its wake. In fact, very few of us can say we are untouched by it. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of residential treatment facilities for those afflicted by alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA). Which is why Holy Family Memorial committed to support the new CORE Treatment Services and help them open their doors.

A nonprofit, 16-bed residential and day-treatment AODA center, CORE is in the former Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity convent building next to Holy Family Memorial Medical Center. CORE is a licensed Community Based Residential Facility (CBRF) and Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)

organization. As such it is only the state’s fifth CCS-certified ADOA residential treatment center.

In 2019, the proceeds from our annual Sip, Savor and Support Gala were given to CORE to help advance their mission and open a facility. With the support of HFM and the community, CORE was able to open their doors on March 12, 2020.

Pastor Chris Gilbert of Connection Church, and behavioral health supervisor Carmen Persaud are CORE’s co-founders and co-executive directors. HFM CEO Brett Norell serves on the Board of Directors. Dr. Dean Pollnow, HFM’s Chief Medical Officer, serves as CORE’s medical director. HFM also will provide food service and other support to CORE.

The opening of CORE is a significant step toward improving the health and well-being of Manitowoc County. HFM is proud to partner with CORE in making it possible for this much needed program to take root in Manitowoc County.

**Holy Family Memorial, Manitowoc**

## Matching Funds Increase Access to Fresh Produce for Sheboygan County Residents

Famous for its fried cheese curds and bratwursts, Sheboygan County is working to improve availability and access to fresh produce for its residents. In 2019, HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital partnered with Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization (SCIO) for the fourth consecutive year to support the Double Your Bucks program.

In recent years, organizations throughout Wisconsin piloted initiatives to allow purchases at farmers’ markets using FoodShare (SNAP/formerly food stamps) benefits. Double Your Bucks provides FoodShare recipients with matching funds up to \$10 to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at SCIO Markets, taking place three times a week during market season. Nearly 58 percent of customers surveyed shopped at SCIO markets because FoodShare benefits are accepted.

In addition to purchasing more fruits and vegetables, Double Your Bucks helps low-income families be part of their community while supporting local farmers. One participant shared, “Please thank the funders of the Double Your Bucks program – big help!”

In FY18, the Sheboygan County Community Health Needs Assessment identified nutrition as a prioritized need for the community, and HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital will continue to support efforts to help address that need.

**HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan**

## Hit the Trail

The ability for Oconto Falls residents to “hit the trail” is now a reality as the 1,145-foot walking trail in the city completed its final phase of construction in September 2020.

The eight-foot-wide trail runs along the Oconto Falls High School campus, a major county highway and near HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital. Residents now have a safe walking path where there were no sidewalks previously. HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital and the Oconto Falls School District provided funding for the final portion. Other supportive groups include the Oconto Falls Area Chamber of Commerce and the Healthy Oconto County Coalition.

The trail system project grew out of an identified need for increased physical activity for residents of Oconto County. The most recent community health needs assessment stated 1 in 4 Oconto County adults reported no physical activity, and 28 percent of Oconto County adults were considered obese. By creating safe walking trails that connect to existing sidewalks, residents are encouraged to become more active.

To celebrate the completion of the trail, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for participating organizations and community members.

**HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls**

## Sources of Strength Program For Teens Expands To More Communities

Thanks to a long-term investment, ThedaCare is providing kids hope, help and strength in Northeast and Central Wisconsin. The hospital system is funding \$280,000 over five years to expand the universal Sources of Strength prevention program in rural communities.

Developed in 1998 by Mark LoMurray, a North Dakota counselor, Sources of Strength (SoS) has blossomed across the U.S. and in other parts of the world. The highly respected and effective peer-led program addresses suicide prevention among teens. It also helps children with interpersonal violence, bullying and substance-use challenges.

SoS has been prevalent in the Fox Cities, previously implemented in 17 schools through the ThedaCare-supported N.E.W. Mental Health Connection. The Connection is expanding the program to all interested high schools in Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties.

“Sources of Strength uses peer relationships to build resilience, increase connection and teach healthy coping strategies,” said Tracey Ratzburg, a Community Health Specialist with the ThedaCare Community Health Improvement team. “Recognizing our strengths that bring us through challenging

times is foundational to strong mental health. It is a skill that will carry students through life. SoS gets upstream by engaging youth and will positively impact the entire community.”

The major funding by ThedaCare resulted in the expansion of SoS to five rural school districts during the 2019-20 school year.



*ThedaCare is providing hope, help and strength in Northeast and Central Wisconsin through funding efforts to expand the Sources of Strength prevention program in rural communities.*

School districts commit to three years of training and support in the program with an option for two additional years. The ThedaCare funding helps reduce the training cost to schools by about 75%, from \$15,000 to \$3,875, for the first three years of the program.

Expanding SoS to partner school districts in the rural counties was a strategy identified through work by ThedaCare to address mental-health and substance-use challenges among youth and to build their resiliency during these challenging years.

Each SoS program has a blend of peer leaders and adult advisers from the school and community.

**ThedaCare, Appleton**

## Support for Cancer Patients in Winnebago County

At Aurora Health Care, we offer the latest, most effective treatment options. But caring for the whole person involves much more than the therapies that target their cancer directly.

Given the complexity of cancer care, people undergoing cancer treatments require additional support, including help with logistics and care for their minds, bodies, and spirits. Cancer patients and their loved ones should never feel alone or unsupported.

A Cancer Nurse Navigator (CNN) is a certified nurse whose clinical expertise, extensive experience and specialized training allows them to effectively enable patients and their loved

ones to make informed decisions and guide them through the through the cancer care process. Starting from diagnosis, a CNN helps patients overcome barriers to optimal care and links them to support services that are most appropriate to meet their individual needs.

In addition to the care our CNNs provided to patients in our hospital and local clinics, to provide community cancer outreach in 2019:

- 18 survivorship plans were developed.
- 6 community survivorship events were held with 106 attendees.
- 3 breast cancer screening events were held with 2,937 community members screened.
- 4 skin cancer screening events were held with 88 community members screened.
- 690 low dose CT scans for lung cancer were provided to patients.

Through community education and screening events, we hope to minimize cancer risk and improve outcomes through early detection. When a diagnosis does occur, our CNNs are there to reduce barriers and support patients every step of the way.

#### **Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh**

### **Network of Care for Mental Wellness**

According to a national study by Mental Health America, over 18 percent of individuals in Wisconsin were experiencing a mental health illness in 2019. Navigating the process to find and receive mental health care can be cumbersome.

Launched in Brown County, Connections for Wellness is a community-wide initiative to address issues related to mental wellness. The coalition is comprised of 16 local organizations ranging from health care to public schools and law enforcement. A coalition priority was to create a “one-stop” mental health resource for individuals in Brown, Outagamie, Calumet and Winnebago counties. Thus, [www.myconnectionnew.org](http://www.myconnectionnew.org) was created.

The website allows users to take an anonymous mental health screening to assess their risk for mental health challenges and find local organizations. It features a directory of crisis services, behavioral health and substance abuse resources, all searchable by zip code. The directory includes contact information, location, fees, application process, eligibility requirements and payment/insurance accepted for organizations. Users have access to over 30,000 health-related articles and fact sheets, produced by experts and leading organizations. Additionally, users can learn about current legislation impacting mental health and/or substance abuse

and the organizations that provide advocacy.

In an effort to continue improving community access to mental health resources, HSHS St. Vincent and St. Mary’s Hospitals in Green Bay provided support to Connections for Wellness.

In the first year of the website being available, it received, on average, 202 visits per day; most visits occurred between 12 and 3 a.m.; engagement time averaged seven minutes.

#### **HSHS St. Vincent Hospital and HSHS St. Mary’s Medical Center, Green Bay**

### **SANE Program Expansion in Manitowoc County**

Sexual assault and rape are under reported, and the definition of sexual assault varies across agencies. Sexual trauma can have harmful and lasting impact on the victims, families, and communities, including unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and physical and psychological consequences.

In discussions with our community partners, we determined that there was a need for enhanced services for victims of sexual assault. As a result, in 2016, our hospital Emergency Department (ED) expanded services to include the availability of comprehensive medical forensic exams for all sexual assault victims in Manitowoc County. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is provided by specially trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). The program consists of emotional support for the victim, a medical/forensic exam, forensic evidence collection, medications for prevention of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, and forensic photo documentation in compliance with the “Federal Rules of Evidence”. There is no cost to the patient for these services.



*The private waiting area located within the SANE suite.*

In 2017, to better respond to community needs, our program expanded even further to include all victims of multiple types of crimes, including child abuse, elder abuse, strangulation, domestic violence and physical assault. Additionally, local

services were enhanced to include services for pediatric patients and victims of domestic violence. In 2019, we were able to create a private treatment suite adjacent to our ED. This area includes a private waiting room along with a private bathroom/shower and exam room for our patients.

In 2019 our SANE program served 31 patients.

#### **Aurora Medical Center in Manitowoc County, Two Rivers**

### **Partnering to Prevent Dementia-Related Crisis Incidents**

As one of the community benefit core principles within our 2019 Implementation Strategy Plan, Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center (ASMMC) strives to build a seamless continuum of care by addressing the underlying causes of persistent health challenges in Sheboygan County. One area of focus is the increased awareness and management of chronic diseases such as dementia within our aging population.



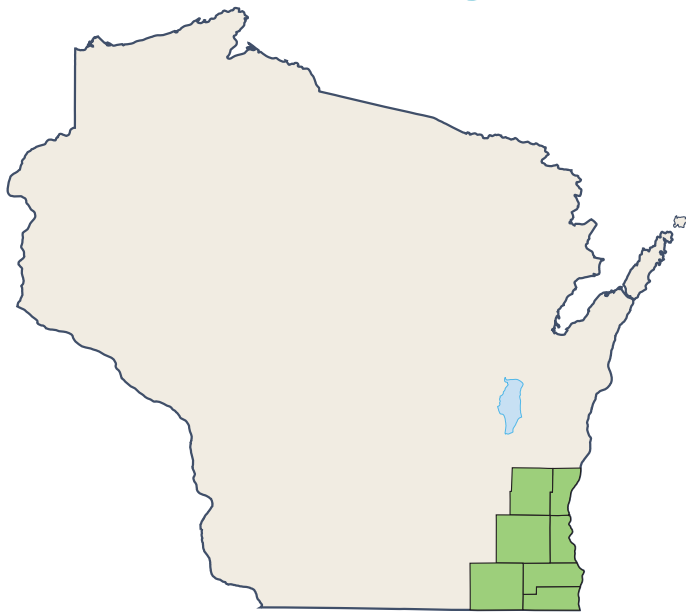
*Community members learning how to safely respond to community members experiencing a dementia crisis to minimize trauma rise.*

Our hospital partners with the Dementia Crisis Care Task Force of Sheboygan County to raise awareness and teach the community how to de-escalate aggressive behaviors in persons with dementia and to help prevent dementia-related crisis incidents. Multidisciplinary education provides a better understanding of roles and responsibilities for all those in the chain of care while increased access to appropriate resources and specialized training in proper response techniques improves decision making for those managing persons with dementia who are experiencing a crisis. This results in less harm to the patients and often more positive experiences for the patients and their loved ones.

Over 1,500 local professionals, including emergency department team members, first responders, law enforcement agencies, facility caregivers, and family caregivers in Sheboygan County have been trained so far. Many of those trained have expressed how this specialized education and targeted training has become invaluable in their ability to better serve their patients experiencing symptoms of dementia.

#### **Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center**

# Southeastern Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:**  
**\$828,920,294**

## Charity Care

### A Helping Hand Just in Time

After being assessed by the medical team in our emergency department (ED), it was quickly determined that Angel's appendix was inflamed and required immediate surgical removal. Angel worked full time but the small company she worked for didn't offer medical insurance. – Angel was so worried about paying her medical bills that she even considered asking to leave the hospital without scheduling her procedure.

Thankfully, our financial advocate was able to meet with Angel and her grandmother, who accompanied her to the hospital. Together they completed a financial assessment. The Advocate determined that Angel's income was slightly over the income limits for Medicaid, however, she was able to approve her for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program.

The approval allowed Angel to keep her procedure on schedule and it was covered 100 percent.

Angel and her grandmother hugged and cried tears of joy when Angel received her approval.

Before leaving Angel's inpatient room, the Advocate gave her number to Angel and encouraged her to reach out when open enrollment starts again so she could help her enroll in coverage for future medical needs.

**Aurora Medical Center in Summit**

## Patient Care Grant Helps Solidify Skills for Long-Term Recovery

It was high school commencement day when Gabe walked confidently to the stage. As his mom Julie watched proudly, she expected him to accept his diploma and move on. Instead, Gabe stopped and asked to speak.

"The kid blew it out of the park!" Julie exclaimed. "He gave such an amazing speech about hope and perseverance. He brought everyone to tears."



*Julie and Gabe at his high school commencement day*

It's hard to believe that three years earlier, Gabe's obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) prevented him from leaving his house for a year. Unable to find appropriate care near their home, they were referred to residential treatment at Rogers Behavioral Health in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

Overall, Gabe spent a total of six months at Rogers – four months the first time and two months the second time, with a year gap in between. As Gabe reflects, "It took me a while to give treatment a try, but when I did, I found that it actually worked."

Gabe was just beginning to understand the skills needed to control his symptoms when their insurance coverage ended. When Gabe went home, he did well for a while, but eventually began to relapse.

During his second round of treatment, insurance coverage ended after five weeks. That's when his treatment team contacted Rogers Behavioral Health Foundation and applied for a three-week Patient Care Grant so he could stay at Rogers and solidify his skills for long-term recovery.

Today, Gabe uses his experience to be a mentor and educate people about OCD. "He's doing well now because he has the training to do so," says Julie. "I wish everyone could have the same opportunity as Gabe."

**Rogers Behavioral Health**

## A Helping Hand When Access is an Issue

Many patients seek out financial assistance after receiving a serious diagnosis when care is critical, but they have no way to pay for it on their own. Such was the case for Maria.

Maria is currently battling two types of cancer. She receives her treatments at Aurora Medical Center in Kenosha. Being undocumented and living on a limited income, Maria relies on the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program to help her pay for the critical care she needs to fight the cancers.

Thankfully, our financial advocate meets with Maria regularly to complete a financial assessment. At each reassessment meeting, Maria provides all the documents needed and submits them with the completed application.

Maria and her family are grateful for the support. One more than one occasion, they have told the Financial Advocate that Maria would not have access to her treatments if it wasn't for the Helping Hand program.

**Aurora Medical Center in Kenosha**

## A Helping Hand Following an Animal Attack

They may be called "man's best friend" but dogs are still animals and they can still bite. Sometimes when a dog bites, it causes severe injuries that require medical attention, even if that victim is uninsured. Here's Adam's story:

Adam arrived at the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora Lakeland Medical Center in June 2020. He had been walking outside when a stray dog attacked him, resulting in severe injuries to his legs and hands. Adam knew he needed immediate medical attention but expressed his concern to the nurses caring for him that he was going to receive a bill that he couldn't afford.

Unfortunately, when the COVID-19 pandemic started impacting Wisconsin, Adam lost his job. He was receiving \$370.00 per week in unemployment benefits but that was only enough to cover his basic living expenses. He didn't have anything "extra" that he could budget to pay down any medical bills.

Aware of his situation, the hospital's Financial Advocate reached out to Adam to complete a financial assessment. Through that assessment, the Advocate was able to approve Adam for a 100% discount on his ED visit through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program.

After the ED team members patched him up and he got word that the dog that attacked him was obtained by local animal authorities, Adam was able to return home, worry free.

**Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn**

## A Helping Hand When the Unexpected Occurs

Sometimes, no matter how careful we are, things happen that lead to the need to seek medical attention.

Elizabeth, a single mother of two young children, found herself seeking care in the Emergency Department (ED) or Aurora Medical Center in Burlington after she experienced an accidental injury in May 2020.

As the nurse prepared Elizabeth for discharge, she asked if she had any questions. Elizabeth's response was, "Do you have anyone who can help me figure out how I am going to pay for this bill?"

Per Elizabeth's request, the nurse forwarded Elizabeth's contact information on to the hospital's Financial Advocate. When the Advocate was able to connect with Elizabeth, Elizabeth informed her that her children were covered under Badger Care but that she was not eligible due to being six percentage points over the maximum wage limits. In other words, she was over income limits for Badger Care coverage but was unable to afford purchasing medical coverage on her own.

Through their phone conversation, the Financial Advocate was able to complete a financial assessment with Elizabeth. The assessment resulted in approval for a 100% discount on the expenses incurred due to her ED visit through the Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program.

When the Advocate shared the approval news with Elizabeth, she could hear Elizabeth begin to cry. "Thank you!" Elizabeth responded to the news. "You have no idea what this means to me! Thank you so much!"

**Aurora Medical Center in Burlington**

## A Helping Hand to Heal a Wounded Leg

Alex landed his dream job working for a startup company. Unfortunately, because the small company was still in infancy, they didn't offer medical insurance.

Shortly after starting his job, Alex injured his leg. He thought he could care for the wound at home to avoid a medical bill he couldn't afford but after a few days, it was clear he needed professional medical help.

Alex went to the ED at Aurora Medical Center in Grafton, which resulted in an inpatient stay. Alex's wound was severely infected and required intravenous antibiotics. Doctors informed Alex that the infection was so severe he was at risk for losing his leg.

Now Alex had two major concerns: Can they save his leg and how was he going to pay this critical care?



As his physicians focused on his leg, the hospital's Financial Advocate helped Alex complete a financial assessment. When the Advocate called Alex to inform him that he was approved for a 100% discount on the care he already received and for the follow-up care he still needed through the Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program, Alex didn't believe her.

The Advocate could hear Alex's becoming emotional. "My doctors just told me that I would get to keep his leg and now you're telling me that wouldn't be responsible for the bill. This really is a miracle!"

Since his approval, Alex has called the Financial Advocate twice to ensure his follow-up care is still covered because he still can't believe it.

**Aurora Medical Center in Grafton**

## **A Letter of Appreciation for a Helping Hand**

*Dear Aurora Financial Advocate,*

*I am a single mom with two little kids. I recently visited the Emergency Department at Aurora Medical Center in Washington County. I don't have insurance, but I wasn't sure where else to go when I needed help.*

*I've been sick for a while, but my boss finally told me that I wouldn't be allowed to work again until I saw a doctor. I am an hourly employee so working less hours means making less money. I've been asking my employer for years about getting*

*access to insurance through them, but the reply is always, "We're working on it."*

*While I was in the hospital, you met with me and helped me complete a financial assessment. When you approved me for a 100% discount on my care through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program, you made my day!*

*My life has gotten so much better since my hospital stay. My symptoms are gone, and I am back to work full-time. 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.*

*-A Grateful Patient*

**Aurora Medical Center in Washington County, Hartford**

## **A Helping Hand During a Behavioral Health Crisis**

Managing a mental health diagnosis proves to be difficult for many patients. Sometimes it takes a long time before a patient stabilizes, but with professional help, a support system, and sometimes medication, it is possible.

Unfortunately, when a patient isn't feeling stable, they may act out toward their care team. This was the case with one patient that the Financial Advocate at Aurora Psychiatric Hospital encountered. While the patient was admitted as inpatient,

the staff realized that he had a large amount of outstanding charges and asked the Financial Advocate to reach out to see if he could help the patient.

The patient proved very difficult to work with. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to work with the patient over-the-phone, the Advocate visited the patient in-person. When he met the Advocate face-to-face, the patient was much more willing to answer the Advocate's questions and complete a financial assessment. He didn't trust the Advocate on the phone but felt more comfortable communicating with him when he could see that he was a real person who truly just wanted to help.

Following the assessment, the Advocate was able to approve the patient for a 100% discount on his outstanding medical bills through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program. This financial relief allowed the patient to focus solely on his mental health.

**Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa**

## **A Helping Hand While a Wound Heals**

Carlos was recently admitted as an inpatient through the Emergency Department (ED) at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center. He is an undocumented single man in his mid-fifties. He has no children and has been unable to work due to a non-healing wound on his foot.

Aware of his situation, the Financial Advocate reached out to Carlos to see if she could help him in any way. Carlos did not meet criteria for any Medicaid program due to his non-resident status, age (under 65) and the fact that he had no minor children.

However, after completing a financial assessment, the Financial Advocate determined Carlos qualified for a 100% discount through the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program. The program covered his medically necessary services in the ED, during his inpatient stay, and follow-up services with wound care and hyperbaric for the following 30 days.

The Advocate met with Carlos every thirty days following his hospital discharge to complete a reassessment that ensured a continuation of this financial assistance approval based on based on his critical medical needs. Eventually, after several months, Carlos' wound healed sufficiently, and he was able to return to work.

**Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee**

## **A Helping Hand When Your Own Arm Stops Working**

Imagine this: You're a 34-year-old, single man. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit your community and you've been furloughed from work and quarantined to your home for the past three months. You have little to no income now, you have yet to see a single unemployment payment, and you've started losing function in your right arm.

This is Michael's story.

When he arrived at the Aurora St. Luke's South Shore Emergency Department (ED) it had already been about a month since he had last been able to use his arm normally. When the ED physician examining him asked Michael why he had delayed seeking help, Michael told him he was nervous about being able to pay for any medical bills.

The ED physician discharged Michael but referred him to a neurologist for follow-up care. He also referred Michael to the hospital's Financial Advocate.

When Michael met with the Advocate, she worked with him over-the-phone to complete a financial assessment. The Advocate was able to help Michael enroll in Badger Care for the upcoming follow-up care and surgery he needed. She was also able to approve him for Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program to cover the ED expense he has already incurred the month prior.

Michael is still healing and now has insurance coverage to carry him through the recovery process. He has already seen improvements in his arm function.

**Aurora St. Luke's South Shore, Milwaukee**

## **A Helping Hand When Health Comes First**

For some, it feels easier to ignore medical symptoms than to carry the burden of taking on a medical bill you know you cannot afford. Unfortunately, when serious symptoms develop, deferring medical care has the potential lead to more costly outcomes, including death.

Marquis was experiencing chest pain. He was a younger man so he really thought it was a fluke, that perhaps he was just over-exerting himself, and that the pain would eventually go away and he could avoid a medical bill he knew he couldn't pay.

After a few days of pain, his family convinced him to seek medical care at the Aurora Sinai Medical Center Emergency Department (ED). His family knew that his health should always come first.

Thankfully, following an exam by an ED physician, Marquis received word that he was okay. Now his focus went to trying to figure out how he would pay the bill he knew would be coming his way. He was uninsured, only worked part-time, and had no savings to cover this cost.

Aware of his insurance status, the financial advocate expedited the application process for the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. Marquis was approved for a 100% discount on his ED visit.

When he received news of his approval, Marquis let out a huge sigh of relief. He told the Advocate, “You just made my day!”

**Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee**

## I Am Proud To Be A Helping Hand For Patients In Need

A note from a Financial Advocate at Aurora West Allis Medical Center:

“Due to the pandemic, there have been many patients who have found themselves uninsured but in need of medical care. These patients are often worried, anxious, scared, and sometimes even still in shock. Many express that they feel like the rug was pulled out from under them.

Many have lost their jobs and are struggling to pay their family’s basic living expenses. Then they find themselves in the emergency department unexpectedly and have no idea how they are going to add that expense to the mountain of debt that is growing before them. Those that are told they need to follow-up care become even more overwhelmed.

Thankfully, as Aurora Financial Advocates, we have been given the opportunity to continue our work and complete financial assessments over-the-phone with those who need our help. I often find that although many patients are apprehensive at first, they are quickly relieved when they fully understand I am there to help them through this. That the hospital they came to for medical helps understands that their total well-being also includes their emotional and financial well-being.

Informing patients of their Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance approval is like offering a beacon of light in total darkness. It is rewarding to know that I can offer a little stability for a patient during a time of uncertainty.

This is the reason I love my job and am proud to be an Aurora Financial Advocate.”

**Aurora West Allis Medical Center**

## COVID-19 Efforts

### Ascension Wisconsin Addresses Food Insecurity in Milwaukee

Upstart Kitchen in Milwaukee’s Sherman Park neighborhood celebrated its relaunched opening in September 2020 after plans to open the food business incubator earlier in the year were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Upstart Kitchen offers aspiring food entrepreneurs mentorship, training and community connections to help launch their businesses.

It had planned to open in the spring, but due to the pandemic, pivoted its operations to include meal preparation for Sherman Park neighborhood residents facing food insecurity. The food incubator has served tens of thousands of meals.

Ascension Wisconsin invested \$50,000 in Prism EDC’s UpStart Kitchen program to provide more than 6,000 meals per month from September through December 2020, a welcomed blessing for the program which had cobbled together small donations for the first few months of operation.

“Food insecurity has spiked to an unprecedented level during the pandemic and the lack of access to nutritious food is taking a toll on the health of many in our community,” said Reggie Newson, vice president of government and community services and chief advocacy officer, Ascension Wisconsin. “As we look for ways to serve the most vulnerable populations affected by the coronavirus crisis, we are grateful for the opportunity to support UpStart Kitchen entrepreneurs and work together with innovation and compassion to improve the health of our community.”



*Ascension Wisconsin announces its investment in UpStart Kitchen to address food insecurity in Milwaukee during the pandemic.*

Ascension Wisconsin’s contribution will subsidize UpStart Kitchen and provide diabetic-friendly and healthy meals for vulnerable residents with limited access to food during COVID-19. One-hundred meals will be distributed each week through the Ascension Ebenezer Health Resource Center to some of Ascension Wisconsin’s patients including vulnerable senior citizens, high-risk moms-to-be and high-risk diabetic patients.

**Ascension St. Joseph Hospital, Milwaukee**

## Connecting Kids and Families with Community Resources During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges to everyone in our communities, and especially for those who are underserved or burdened by health inequities. Children's Wisconsin staff who engage directly with families in community settings creatively adjusted their outreach during this unprecedented time.

Children's Wisconsin community health teams conducted well-checks with families, helping connect them to community resources and facilitated porch drop offs for items to meet their identified needs. Staff recently delivered more than 200 book bags with school supplies, headphones and personal protective equipment to families in need.



*Daven and Natalie participate in Project Ujima's virtual summer camp*

Children's school health nurses connected with students and their families to assist and coordinate medication management, school supplies, equipment requests and more. Project Ujima offered its annual summer camp virtually this year for those impacted by violence, enabling participants to connect and engage with one other. Staff provided families with weekly activity boxes, virtual story time, and worked with local vendors to deliver fresh produce, meat and grains for families. Additionally, Children's Wisconsin's e-learning programs offered to schools for free are now available to parents and caregivers facilitating virtual learning at home.

Children's home visitors resumed in-person visits with families this summer, enabling staff to reconnect with families and offer support with basic needs, particularly for those families at higher risk. Children's Wisconsin staff began providing support with rent payments, gas for transportation to work, and providing diapers and formula. In addition, staff connected families in need with local food pantries and, if needed, delivered groceries.

**Children's Wisconsin - Milwaukee**

## Advocate Aurora Health COVID-19 Response



As Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) continues to spread throughout our communities, we continue our ongoing effort to slow transmission of the virus.

Advocate Aurora Health launched the Safe Care Promise, which includes extra steps they

are taking to keep their patients, visitors, and team members safe. This includes virtual check-ins, universal masking and screening for all who enter their locations, encouraging social distancing through rearranged furniture, staggering appointment times and enhanced cleaning in all areas, including additional disinfectant for high-touch spaces.

To enhance COVID-19 awareness and safety within their communities, some of their outreach efforts include:

**Mask donations:** Advocate Aurora Health donated over one million disposable masks and other personal protective equipment to community clinics and other small organizations across Wisconsin and Illinois. In Wisconsin, this included:

- 352,500 disposable masks to essential workers, including, food programs, shelters, emergency responders, and free clinics serving Wisconsin communities.
- 257,500 masks to organizations serving Milwaukee County communities hardest hit by the pandemic and largely people of color.
- 45,000 cloths masks to Wisconsin faith-based congregations and Federally Qualified Health Centers.

**COVID-19 Testing:** Free testing is available by appointment to anyone in the community who is experiencing at least one COVID symptom or has experienced significant exposure. The number of testing sites Advocate Aurora Health can accommodate changes as the availability of supplies change.

**COVID-19 Resource Center:** Through the Advocate Aurora Health website, 24/7 COVID-19 hotline, social media platforms, and partnerships with community-based organizations, we are committed to providing reliable, up to date COVID-19 health information.

Through these and other actions, Advocate Aurora Health remains committed to slowing the spread of COVID-19.

**Advocate Aurora Health**

## Technology Helps Rogers Connect with Patients, Community During Pandemic

Rogers Behavioral Health has found innovative solutions to continue to treat patients across Wisconsin and the U.S. and connect with communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Just days after the first stay-at-home orders were issued in Wisconsin, Rogers transitioned its entire network of mental health clinics to offering partial hospitalization and intensive outpatient treatment in a secure, virtual environment through Rogers Connect Care. This allows patients to continue receiving specialized, evidence-based treatment during the pandemic in a way that reduced their risk as well as the care team's risk.

Rogers, with the help of its foundation, also provided more than 60 laptops to patients who didn't have the required technology to receive telehealth treatment.

Rogers is an active participant in its communities, volunteering, sponsoring, and partaking in events like annual mental health walks and community festivals. While in person activities were no longer possible, Rogers is utilizing Facebook to hold live Q&A sessions for the public with Rogers experts. These events have covered topics like teen addiction, parenting during uncertain times, anxiety disorders and their treatment, and virtual care for mental health. Recordings are available on Rogers' Facebook page.

In addition, a free, four-part podcast series titled "Reducing the Risk of Teen Addiction" was released, hosted by Rogers' Michelle Maloney, executive director, addiction services. It provides a useful resource to parents, teachers, and mental health professionals and can be found at [Rogersbh.org/TeenAddiction](https://Rogersbh.org/TeenAddiction).

**Rogers Behavioral Health**

## COVID-19 Community Testing

Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin (F&MCW) partnered with local community health centers to provide the lab support for COVID-19 testing. During a time when test kits were limited, F&MCW provided its support to those under-resourced communities.

Three of the five community health centers in Milwaukee partnered with F&MCW: Milwaukee Health Services, Progressive Community Health Centers and Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers.

F&MCW's lab provided one day turnaround for test results, lowering anxiety for those waiting for personal test results during this unprecedented pandemic.

The positivity rate at the community health centers was as high as 44% at its peak, indicating testing resources were being deployed in communities with great need.

Froedtert & MCW also provided drive through COVID-19 testing sites at its clinics located throughout southeastern Wisconsin.

**Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee**

## Using Telehealth to Manage Chronic Care During COVID-19

The use of telehealth rapidly escalated when COVID-19 halted in-person clinic visits. Health systems across the country were scrambling to optimize virtual healthcare to continue caring for patients during a unique time of social distancing.



*Dr. Lauren Hollandsworth, Family Medicine Physician with Ascension Medical Group uses telehealth to connect with patients.*

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) identified the highest risk patients for COVID-19 were those with chronic illnesses that require monitoring and ongoing care to avoid hospitalization. High on this list were patients with one of more of the following conditions: diabetes, hypertension, older than 65, liver disease, or lung disease.

To begin proactive outreach to patients most at risk, Ascension Wisconsin clinicians coordinated with the IT department to sort medical records to identify people who were at higher risk for hospitalization if they contracted COVID-19. Using the Charlson Comorbidity Index (CCI), which predicts 10-year survival in patients with multiple comorbidities, and certain diagnosis codes the technology team scored patients using the CCI and the clinical team then began to contact them based on their risk score. Those who had not been seen recently were proactively contacted and encouraged to set up a virtual visit with their provider.

The Ascension Wisconsin team developed tools that would guide clinicians during a telehealth visit. This included critical questions related to mental health at a time when people were isolated due to in-home sheltering. Asking questions about their sleep habits, lifestyle, ability to exercise and whether they are interacting with others in meaningful ways can help the clinician determine how the patient is doing. Based on their responses, medications can be adjusted or changed. And with that, the physician also can ask if their patient can access medications by having home health or the pharmacy deliver them. In some cases, the physician might determine that a virtual visit with a behavioral health professional would be beneficial.

From mid-March to June 1, 2020, Ascension Wisconsin clinicians provided more than 107,300 virtual care visits. More than 1,000 providers and specialists across the state now offer virtual care visits so patients can feel supported and safe during an unprecedented time.

**Ascension Wisconsin, Milwaukee**

## Spanish-Speaking Patients are Top of Mind

Interpreters from ProHealth Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital and professionals from ProHealth Care's Hispanic Health Resource Center are a lifeline to care and resources for Latino patients and community members, particularly those whose primary language is Spanish.



*ProHealth's Spanish interpreters for community members requesting COVID-19 testing at La Casa de Esperanza in summer 2020*

"We have seen a spike in COVID-19 cases in Waukesha County," said Saul Juarez Aguilar, manager of care management. "Many community members are scared to seek basic services because of the coronavirus. We say, we can help you and let's stay safe together."

Among non-English speakers served by ProHealth, Spanish is the most prevalent language. In the U.S., COVID-19 has affected three times as many Latinos as white people who are not Latino. People who do not speak English may be hesitant to contact a health care provider because of language and cultural barriers.

The ProHealth interpreters serve hospital, home care, clinic, urgent care and emergency department patients. The services often are being provided by phone during the pandemic, but they can be provided in person when needed.

The staff also have provided Spanish interpretation for Waukesha County public health and National Guard drive-through COVID-19 testing. In addition, ProHealth is providing virtual diabetes prevention workshops and chronic disease programs in Spanish during the pandemic.

ProHealth leaders have been in close contact with representatives from federal, state and local public health agencies, free clinics, nonprofit community organizations and local schools and universities in support of Latino patients and community members throughout the pandemic.

**ProHealth Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital**

## Free Clinics

### Continuing Our Mission Through the Bread of Healing

Since its founding over 145 years ago, Aurora Sinai Medical Center (ASMC) has existed to serve its community. As Milwaukee's only downtown hospital, ASMC has a strong focus in supporting greater racial equity and civil rights. This focus comes through in our workplace initiatives, clinical programs, and especially through our community partnerships.

The Bread of Healing Clinic (BOH) was founded in 2000 by an ASMC parish nurse. The clinic's mission is to provide high-quality, basic medical care for uninsured community members who experience limited access to health care services. It has grown over the years and now provides vital health services at three community-based sites on Milwaukee's north side, including Cross Lutheran Church, Eastbrook Church and the Agape Center. In total, these three clinic sites care for more than 4,000 community members annually, including approximately 125 bilingual patients.



*After receiving medical and dental services at Ascension St. Joseph's Medical Mission at Home, participants left with hygiene items, healthy snacks and in some cases, hugs.*

The clinic's patients also have access to our Specialty Access for Uninsured Program (SAUP), which connects uninsured patients who receive their care within free clinics to specialty care providers within ASMC and other Milwaukee area Advocate Aurora Health locations. All services rendered through this program are free to the patient and written off as part of the Aurora Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance program. In 2019, 343 individuals received specialty care services through the SAUP program.

ASMC supports BOH by providing essential financial support, accepting clinic vouchers from clinic patients for radiology and lab services, and supporting ASMC team members who donate time to support clinic operations or provide patient care.

**Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee**

## Medical Mission at Home Delivers Care to Hundreds at North Division High School

A sore tooth, unchecked blood pressure, no medication and a long overdue mammogram were some of the reasons that brought participants to Ascension Wisconsin's first Medical Mission at Home in Milwaukee. North Division High School was transformed into a medical center with help from more than 500 volunteers. Hundreds of health care professionals spent their Saturday delivering free care, including more than 600 medical and 147 dental services to 230 individuals.

Medical missions are most commonly thought of when volunteer caregivers travel to other countries to provide medical services. The Ascension Wisconsin Medical Mission at Home does the same thing but for our own community.

The Medical Mission at Home offers spiritually centered care to improve the health of our neighbors, friends and anyone who may find it difficult to access the care they need.

Access to affordable health care remains a challenge for many. For those living without insurance or high deductibles they can't afford, that can mean some patients are living without vital health tests, screenings and medication.

Medical evaluations, laboratory testing, X-rays, mammograms, ultrasounds, medications, podiatry and dermatology screenings along with dental services, were among the many services offered at no charge.

Thirty community organizations also participated in the event, connecting participants to needed resources including insurance enrollment, mental health programs, violence prevention, asthma, substance abuse, support groups and maternal and infant health.

Helping people get the medical services they need is a big reason Ascension Wisconsin takes its medical mission beyond the walls of a hospital to places like North Division High School.

“Our Medical Mission at Home provides services to a really important group of people who either don’t have health insurance or who are underinsured here in the greater Milwaukee area. Our dedication to helping those who are most in need is unwavering – this day is about positively impacting lives and improving health in our community,” said Kevin Kluesner, chief administrative officer, Ascension St. Joseph.

**Ascension St. Joseph, Milwaukee**

## Providing Free Health Care to People Who are Most in Need

Ascension Wisconsin has sites of care located in urban neighborhoods such as Ascension St. Ben’s Clinic in downtown Milwaukee, which provides free health care and social services to people struggling with homelessness and addiction; and Ascension Angel of Hope Clinic on the city’s southside, which provides free primary care and women’s health services and chronic condition management.

In FY20, Ascension St. Ben’s Clinic and Ascension Angel of Hope Clinic provided primary medical care to more than 2,500 individuals; Ascension St. Ben’s Clinic also provided 1,139 social work/case manager encounters and 448 nursing outreach encounters for people living in homeless shelters.

**Ascension Wisconsin, Milwaukee**

## Continuing to Serve in New Ways

The Aurora Walker’s Point Community Clinic (AWPCC) is committed to helping people live well. Serving a community hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, team members adjusted to remain connected to the community.

The AWPCC behavioral health team moved the popular “Come & Relax” stress management program to a virtual platform. Many patients appreciate the opportunity to learn techniques during this stressful time. One patient with chronic insomnia said (in Spanish), “After the breathing exercise I felt so relaxed. My anxiety felt reduced. I slept extremely well that night and the following nights. I continue to practice the breathing exercises and I have begun to combine them with my prayer life. I was so centered when my adult children who live with me told me they were sick with COVID that I handled the situation with calm and addressed it with cautious action.”

The refugee health team at AWPCC focuses on helping new refugees find access to wellness services. AWPCC provides refugee patients and families with additional support including multilingual community health workers, education, coaching, wellness support groups, and acclimation projects. All services build on individual resilience as our patients build new lives and achieve self-sufficiency. One Burmese patient shared, “I feel that clinic staff are like my new family. Being in a new

country during a pandemic has been scary, but staff always reach out. We received masks and information, food, and baby supply deliveries. They always check on us.”

Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center provides financial support for AWPCC.

**Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center, Milwaukee**

## Treatment for Hip Pain Uncovers Hidden Danger for West Bend Man

As a 62-year-old self-employed flooring contractor, Richard Bath knew about aches and pains. Since 2016 a yearly cortisone shot had usually done the trick to help alleviate his hip pain. But when his third one wasn’t helpful, combined with consistent fatigue and bouts of profuse sweating, he and his then fiancé, Carrie, visited Albrecht Free Clinic, a partner of Froedtert West Bend Hospital, to get checked out.



*Richard (right) catches up with Robert Gibson, MD, former medical director at Albrecht Free Clinic, during a recent visit*

Thanks to volunteered time from health care providers, nurses and others, the Albrecht Free Clinic has provided free medical and dental care to uninsured and underinsured Washington County residents since 1996. The partnership with Froedtert West Bend Hospital also allows the clinic to offer diagnostic lab testing and other donated clinical services.

Richard was self-employed and he lacked insurance so he qualified to be seen at the clinic for his hip pain. During that visit in early 2019, he was directed to Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee to receive an abdominal X-ray, free of charge thanks to the partnership between the clinic and the Froedtert & MCW health network.

The X-ray results were alarming. Doctors at Froedtert Hospital found a nearly six-centimeter-wide abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA), which is a blood-filled bulge in the aorta — the main vessel that delivers blood to the body. If left untreated, this bulge could rupture and cause severe pain, excessive internal bleeding, or death. Richard was told he needed surgery as soon as possible and that if it wasn’t operated on soon, there would be a 25% chance of having it burst, which may be fatal. He immediately traveled to Froedtert Hospital where he

received a CT scan and scheduled his procedure. Ten days later, Richard underwent successful minimally invasive endovascular aneurysm repair (EVAR) surgery at Froedtert Hospital.

“I really do owe the health network my life,” said Richard. “When I was told I had a good possibility of dying, I knew this wasn’t something that should be messed around with.”

#### Froedtert West Bend Hospital, West Bend

### School Nurses Provide Care to Students in Milwaukee Public Schools

Children’s Wisconsin is dedicated to our vision of having Wisconsin’s kids be the healthiest in the nation – which includes the goal of keeping children in school healthy, safe and ready to learn. Children’s Wisconsin has placed a registered nurse in 10 Milwaukee Public School partner schools who provide medical care, screenings and referrals to more than 5,000 students each year.

Children’s school nurses assist with medication management and help children and their families manage their chronic health conditions, like asthma or diabetes. The school nurses are collaborative partners in the school, focusing on the whole child and promoting a holistic approach to helping students achieve physical, mental and social-emotional well-being. They also help deliver preventive care and vision screenings, help establish medical and dental homes, assist with behavioral screenings and assessments, aid in school safety and emergency preparedness, and provide daily care coordination for students with complex health conditions, like G-tube feedings and more.

Studies show that when kids are healthy, they spend more time in the classroom and learn more. According to the National Association of School Nurses, schools with a full-time registered nurse have nearly 50% fewer early dismissals for student illness or injury than schools without a nurse. This program has a profoundly positive impact on learning by bridging health care and education and advocating for students and their families. Children’s Wisconsin’s Community Health School Nurses are helping kids stay well so they may be successful in their education and live long, healthy, productive lives.

#### Children’s Wisconsin-Milwaukee

### Waukesha County Community Dental Clinic Improves Access to Dental Care for the Medically Underserved

The Waukesha County Community Dental Clinic in Menomonee Falls serves low-income adults and children needing basic and restorative dental services and oral health education. Froedtert Menomonee Falls Hospital invested \$1.65 million to improve

access to dental care for medically underserved people living in Waukesha County and surrounding communities, making the clinic possible.

The 2,700-square-foot space is ADA-accessible and includes six operatories, one of which is specifically designed to support patients with special health needs.

Calendar year 2019 represented the first full year of operations at this clinic and was met with considerable demand.

A majority of the youth turning to this clinic have rarely, if ever, had access to a dentist prior to the Waukesha County Community Dental Clinic. As a result, they often present with substantial decay and limited knowledge on proper oral health. Initial treatment plans regularly require several visits to repair the current decay.

Positive change is often influenced by strong partnerships. Teamwork and collaboration between Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin health network and Waukesha County Community Dental Clinic provides children and adults access to affordable high-quality dental care, which ultimately improves overall health and well-being.

#### Froedtert Menomonee Falls Hospital

### Hospital-Supported Initiatives

#### Housing is Health: A Navigation Strategy for Homeless Patients in Milwaukee County

It is well known that the most significant social determinant of health is safe, affordable housing. With several thousand men, women and children in Milwaukee County considered

homeless or ‘precariously housed,’ Milwaukee’s four health systems – Advocate Aurora Health, Ascension Wisconsin, Children’s Wisconsin and Froedtert Health – came together through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership to create a housing navigation program to help their homeless patients, especially those with complex medical and behavioral health needs, secure sustainable housing and supportive services.

The health systems’ Housing is Health initiative works in collaboration with the Milwaukee County Housing Division (MCHD) to refer homeless patients receiving care in ER, inpatient and select outpatient settings. The initiative incorporates MCHD social workers or “navigators,” who help patients secure temporary housing, provide case management, and aid in their ultimate transition to permanent housing stability. The program also helps patients secure supportive



services such as public benefits, mental health / AODA treatment, tenancy education, and employment counseling. MCHD navigators work with each patient from the time of contact until the individual is considered 'housing stable,' a process which can extend over many months.

In addition to shared funding from the health systems, the Housing is Health initiative has attracted funding from the Green Bay Packers Foundation and the Greater Milwaukee Business Foundation on Health. Their support has helped cover additional costs such as rent, furniture and utilities for patients in the program. So far in 2020, 41 individuals who were referred into the program now are in permanent housing.

### Milwaukee Health Care Partnership

## Helping Feed Seniors in Need



*Stock Boxes of food are distributed to seniors in need at Ascension Franklin.*

Ascension Wisconsin is committed to improving the health and wellness of the communities it serves but understands that creating healthy communities requires a collaborative approach. To improve health by addressing food insecurity, Ascension Franklin started partnering with Hunger Task Force to enroll eligible seniors into its Stock Box service. Starting in June 2019, a monthly supply of free food staples has been distributed through the hospital's emergency department to community members over the age of 60.

The collaboration with the Hunger Task Force is unique. Ascension Franklin associates help enroll local seniors in the program and carry the boxes filled with canned fruits and vegetables, juice, cereal, canned and dry milk, peanut butter, canned meat, and cheese into their vehicles. Boxes are picked up the second Tuesday of every month.

"We've loved being able to offer this service to the community," said Drinka Marinkovic BSN, RN, emergency department supervisor, Ascension SE Wisconsin-Franklin Campus. "We're incredibly proud of the inpatient and outpatient services we provide at Ascension Franklin but offering access to needed nutritious food is another way to reach our community and our neighbors in a profound way."

### Ascension Franklin, Milwaukee

## Ascension Wisconsin Pledges \$1 Million to the Racine Community Health Center

Thanks to a \$1 million dollar pledge to the Racine Community Health Center (RCHC), the community health center is closer to becoming a reality.

"We are thrilled to be the first health system to support the Racine Community Health Center, which will provide essential access to residents who need it most," said Bernie Sherry, Ministry Market Executive, Ascension Wisconsin, and Senior Vice President, Ascension. "For nearly 150 years, our team at Ascension All Saints Hospital has been serving this community, with a special focus on those who are living in poverty and are vulnerable. This pledge allows us to collaborate with others and extend our charism beyond our four walls to bring health and healing to more people."

The \$1 million pledge, payable in increments of \$200,000 over five years, was the first private sector contribution to the RCHC. The model of service delivery as a freestanding location will offer primary care, case management, health education and behavioral health in the most underserved neighborhoods.



*L to R: Dr. Janice Litza, vice president medical affairs, Ascension All Saints Hospital; Shebaniah Muhammad, RCHC Board of Directors president; Cory Mason, Racine Mayor; Kristin McManmon, Ascension All Saints Hospital president, Bernie Sherry, ministry market executive, Ascension Wisconsin; Reggie Newson, vice president government affairs and community services, Ascension Wisconsin.*

"I am extremely grateful to Ascension Wisconsin for their commitment to the health of our community. Their generosity puts us in a great position to be able to improve access to healthcare for city and county residents," Racine Mayor Cory Mason said.

This commitment affords the city the opportunity to provide services at a community school location, ensuring that students, families and residents receive increased access to healthcare services while making the school the center of the neighborhood.

The Racine Community Health Center at Julian Thomas Elementary School is scheduled to open in December 2020.

### Ascension All Saints Hospital, Racine

## Accessing Expert Advice in Unconventional Places

Chronic 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 nationwide.

In 2017, 25% of adults in Central Racine County reported high blood pressure and 73% of adults in Central Racine County were classified as being overweight, a statistical increase from the baseline of 66% in 2005. Being classified as overweight or obese may not only increase one's risk for high blood pressure, it could also lead to high cholesterol levels, coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, some cancers, low quality of life, and other health conditions.

Walk with a Doc is a world-wide walking program for anyone interested in taking steps for a healthier lifestyle. There is no better way to well-being than starting on your feet to help your heart and improve your general health through movement. While program participants walk at their own pace, they can have questions answered by local physicians.

In 2019, our hospital facilitated 12 Walk with a Doc sessions featuring 12 different physicians and engaging 260 community members. Each session featured a different topic. Some topic examples include whole health goal setting, exercise effects on diabetes and how our minds affect our bodies.

### Aurora Medical Center in Burlington

## A Grateful Heart

The pandemic has been extremely difficult for all of us, but it's been especially challenging for patients dealing with a cancer diagnosis and treatment. As a social worker at the Reiman Cancer Center – Ascension St. Francis, Gina Habrle, develops close relationships with her patients. While monitoring patient care through assessments and advocating for resources, Gina learns what issues patients struggle with and helps them overcome barriers while on their cancer healing journey.

Gina describes one special patient from Milwaukee, Sylvia Ratzke, as a spark plug. "She just has a light about her, a

big personality and an infectious smile," said Gina. Diedra's cancer diagnosis and the pandemic made it impossible for her to continue working as a waitress and she needed some financial help. Gina was able to help Diedra receive funds from Ascension Wisconsin Foundation's Hope Fund and Diedra was extremely grateful. But Gina didn't stop there, she also learned about the This Time Tomorrow Foundation and its Random Acts of Kindness program and decided to nominate Diedra.



*Sylvia Ratzke (center) is surprised with This Time Tomorrow financial assistance at Reiman Cancer Center-Ascension St. Francis.*

Gina's nomination was accepted and together the foundation, Gina and Sylvia's son planned a surprise to share the great news with her.

On a beautiful fall afternoon in the Reiman Cancer Center healing garden, Sylvia was presented with a \$3,000 check to help with her living expenses while she continued her cancer treatment.

The money will ease some financial pressure and anxiety and help her focus on healing. Sylvia was unable to speak due to recent surgery but she put her hands to her heart and wept grateful tears to express her thanks for Gina's efforts.

### Ascension St. Francis Hospital, Milwaukee

## Every 15 Minutes Community Screening

Every 15 Minutes is a two-day program focusing on high school juniors and seniors, which challenges them to think about driving while drunk, personal safety, and the responsibility of making mature decisions. The emotionally charged nationwide program utilizes the creation of a video and mock accident demonstration related to the consequences of driving drunk or distracted. The people featured in the video are real members of the community where the video is filmed and screened.

The EMS Relations and Community Outreach team at our hospital served as advisors on the community planning committee for this event in 2019. Our hospital provided a venue for filming scenes some of trauma and surgery scenes. We were also able to utilize this time as a trauma drill for our hospital providers and team members.

After the initial showing for local high school students, our hospital also led planning for a free community screening, which welcomed over 250 additional attendees. The community screening was planned in collaboration with Grafton High School, Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department and Starting Point. Our community's video is still available for viewing on You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnUtaNPJDao> and has been viewed over 53,000 times.

#### Aurora Medical Center in Grafton

### Ascension Ebenezer Health Resource Center - Health That Goes Beyond Health Care

Located on the lower level of Ebenezer Church of God in Christ on Milwaukee's northside, Ascension Ebenezer Health Resource Center provides access to the city's only diabetic-friendly food pantry, health and wellness screenings, preventive services and onsite support from Ascension Wisconsin nurses and community health workers.

In FY20, 1,800 individuals received health education, primary care referral support and social resource navigation at the Ascension Ebenezer Health Resource Center. Likewise, more than 6,000 individuals received food from the food pantry – with a focus on diabetic and chronic disease individuals, high-risk moms and infants and seniors. This diabetic-friendly food pantry not only remained open during the COVID-19 pandemic but also extended its hours of operation to better serve people who were most in need.

#### Ascension Wisconsin, Milwaukee

### Committed to Supporting our Tiniest Community Members

In our hospital's most recent Community Health Needs Assessment, we discovered that the rate of infants dying before their first birthday in Walworth County was 3.7 deaths per 1,000 live births. Raising awareness around infant health and safety is important for preventing illness, unintentional injury and death.

Did you know that, on average, our hospital delivers 700+ babies each year? To help protect our tiniest community members during 2019:

- 100% of mothers who gave birth at our hospital were educated on car seat safety and safe sleep practices.
- 11 portable cribs were distributed through our partnership with the Walworth County Department of Health & Human Services for patients who delivered at our birthing center and needed a safe place for

their baby to sleep when they returned home from the hospital.

- 10 infant CPR classes were provided to 76 community members.
- 4 babysitting classes were conducted for 54 attendees. Of those attendees who completed evaluations, 100% reported knowledge gained between pre- and post-surveys.



*Aurora Lakeland Medical Center's Community Health Nurse shared reliable health information at the Lake Geneva Children's Expo.*

Through this work and other outreach efforts, we aim to educate community members about the importance of safe infant care and wellness practices to avoid possible negative outcomes.

#### Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn

### Narcan Support For Community Members

Narcan is an opioid antagonist, which means it blocks the effects of pain-relieving and highly addictive drugs such as heroin, morphine, and oxycodone. When administered quickly and properly it counteract the effects of opioids taken in life-threatening quantities, so this prescription drug is commonly utilized in emergency situations.

In early 2019, our hospital's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Community Coordinator partnered with the Kenosha County Opioid Task Force to make Narcan kits available to at-risk patients who have presented in our hospital's Emergency Department and family members of people who have overdosed. Each emergency kit includes two doses of Narcan (naloxone) nasal spray, a pocket mask to assist with breathing, fentanyl testing kits and information for additional community resources.

This program was made possible due to grant funding and the emergency kits were provided by the Kenosha County Division of Health through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which is managed by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Thanks to this partnership, our program is the first of its kind in our community.

### Aurora Medical Center in Kenosha

## Partnering to Combat Gun Violence



Over the past year, physicians and other experts from the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin adult Level I Trauma Center at Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin Comprehensive Injury Center have worked with city leaders, Ascension Health and the City of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention to create a medical partnership for the city's 414LIFE initiative. This new hospital-based partnership augments the 414LIFE program, which uses a public health approach to stop the spread of violence.

The Froedtert & MCW hospital-based violence interruption program is helping save lives by taking steps to interrupt the cycle of violence. Interventions that start early in the hospital setting have the potential to change behavior patterns such as using gun violence to settle disputes or seek retribution. Since Froedtert Hospital's Trauma Center began the program in May 2019, it has seen 384 referrals. The majority of participants were within the age range of 15-35 with a concentration seen among those aged 21-25. Eighty-three percent were male and the majority of those referred to the program had injury events that occurred in the city neighborhoods where violence is occurring the most, suggesting that the program is reaching the intended neighborhoods.

Combining the efforts of eastern Wisconsin's only adult Level I Trauma Center, public health, emergency departments and communities in a coordinated partnership can lead to safer, healthier communities. Going beyond immediate violence intervention, this critical partnership helps address issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health issues and substance abuse that can contribute to health disparities. This partnership connects those affected by gun violence with critical resources and a path to appropriate follow-up health care, with a new clinic now launching to provide integrated healthcare by a team that addresses the biopsychosocial issues after gun violence injury.

414LIFE is modeled after Cure Violence, a successful violence interruption effort which is based in Chicago and implemented in multiple cities around the world. 414LIFE focuses on reducing the burden that gun violence places on individuals, families,

neighborhoods and communities in Milwaukee County by treating gun violence as a disease. A key element to the success of the 414LIFE program is engaging community members as "violence interrupters" in neighborhoods across Milwaukee County and in the hospital setting. 414LIFE incorporates dedicated, credible violence interrupters who have received 65+ hours of training in outreach communication, conflict resolution, and hospital processes and policies.

### Froedtert Hospital - Milwaukee

## ProHealth Care Addresses Food Insecurity

Nutrition is a fundamental part of good health, so the ProHealth Medical Group clinic in downtown Waukesha has found a way to address food insecurity among its patients.

In the first six months of a program launched in 2020, the clinic screened more than 1,900 patients for food insecurity and provided 525 bags of healthy food to nearly 600 patients who screened positive.

The clinic is just a few blocks from ProHealth Waukesha Memorial Hospital. Many of the clinic's patients also receive services at the hospital. The clinic is in an area that the U.S. Department of Agriculture identifies as having less access to nutritious food than other nearby areas.



*Deb Schaber (left), manager of operations for the ProHealth Medical Group clinic on Barstow Street in Waukesha and the Waukesha Family Medicine Residency at ProHealth Care, and Rebekah Tadyak, site leader for the clinic, are shown with food program supplies.*

Food insecurity affects 13% of Wisconsin residents. Those impacted may have difficulty obtaining healthy food, they may at times run out of food, or they may have to make lower cost, unhealthy food choices. ProHealth's Community Health Needs Assessment has identified addressing food insecurity as a community priority.

"Food insecurity is a factor in obesity and diabetes," said Susanne Krasovich, MD, family medicine physician. "It makes it harder for people to incorporate more fresh fruit and vegetables into their diet, or to follow a diabetic or low-sodium diet."

The clinic team uses two Hunger VitalSign evidence-based statements to screen every adult patient for food security before every clinic visit. Physicians are informed of the

screening results before speaking with the patient, so they can discuss nutrition and food access with the patient.

Patients who affirm a screening statement receive a bag of dietitian-recommended food items and a ProHealth local food resource guide. Two bags of food are provided for larger families. Each eligible patient can receive food at every visit.

### ProHealth Waukesha Memorial Hospital

## Expanded Support for Survivors

Sexual assault leaves emotional wounds that can affect the way you interact with the world around you. Like any wound, getting proper care gives you the best chances of getting better. But healing wounds from sexual assault requires a special type of care. And you can get that care at Aurora Medical Center in Summit (AMCS).

In late 2019, AMCS began a new partnership with the local community to provide Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Services 24 hours a day, every day. Through this partnership, our hospital has been able to educate local law enforcement, first responders, and advocacy agencies in Waukesha, Jefferson, Dodge counties on how to work with our hospital on sexual assault response to minimize the risk of additional trauma for the survivor. Through our SANE program, we can provide more specialized, comprehensive medical care than traditional emergency departments.

Since this program began in late 2019, we have been able to provide this sensitive, patient-focused, trauma-informed care for over 20 survivors. When they leave our hospital, we ensure survivors feel safe, supported, believed, heard, respected, reassured, informed, well cared for post-assault, and most importantly, in control of their care.

From collecting evidence to providing court testimony, our SANEs are there to support survivors when it matters most, even if they do not wish to press charges.

### Aurora Medical Center in Summit

## How School-Based Mental Health Helped Arvan Get Back to Being Himself

Eight-year-old Arvan loves Pokemon, building with blocks, and bowling. He's a kind boy with a big heart who always looks to help others. In 1st grade, Arvan started struggling emotionally and behaviorally at school, which began interfering with his learning, his friendships and his overall health and well-being. Other kids were sometimes unkind to him, he had trouble relating to his peers and when he got frustrated, there would be outbursts and running from the classroom. Sadly, he was showing signs of depression and made statements about hurting himself.



*Arvan & his mom Leanna work with Children's therapist Kristine Jacobs*

Staff at Knapp Community School in Racine stepped in, met with Arvan and his mom, Leanna, and suggested he start receiving in-school mental and behavioral health services provided by Children's Wisconsin. Once therapy started, Arvan's behavior quickly began to change. With skills and tools learned in therapy and modeled at home by Leanna, Arvan was learning how to cope with his feelings and interact more positively with others. His mood and ability to learn improved.

Having mental and behavioral health services right in Arvan's school meant Leanna didn't need to take time off work or worry about transportation and coordinating with his teachers. Children's recently began a multiyear campaign to raise awareness and about and deepen our commitment to improving kids' mental and behavioral health called Shine Through. Offering school-based mental and behavioral health care in schools across the state is one way we help reduce barriers and stigma and increase access to this important care for students and their families.

### Children's Wisconsin-Milwaukee

## Behavioral Health Signature Focus Area for the Advocate Aurora Community Strategy

Behavioral health ranked among the top five health issues in all communities we serve. Aurora Psychiatric Hospital (APH) is the hub for Aurora's comprehensive behavioral health services team, which extends behavioral health care into hospital and primary care settings across Aurora's footprint. We continually push to expand and extend our ability to provide access points with multiple inpatient locations, hospital-based outpatient department locations, ambulatory clinic locations, and approximately 200 professional staff throughout Eastern Wisconsin.

Behavioral health professional shortages are a national, state, and local issue. Efforts to recruit, train and retain providers are necessary to increase the numbers of providers available to community members.

Offering continuing education ensures that each provider's practice is current, aids in the development of contact with other behavioral health professionals, provides information about the health system, and enhances self-efficacy. To address this in 2019:

- 11 evidenced-based continuing education programs and 5 intensive workshops were provided with 574 attendees.
- 3 Aurora medical center RN's were trained through an immersion program on working with behavioral health patients.
- 100 Aurora providers were trained in Verbal Defense and Influence on how to manage aggressive behavior.
- 120 primary care providers and support staff were trained on working with behavioral health patients.
- 6 continuing education lectures were held with 124 local high school, middle school, and elementary school professionals attending.

Additionally, to address the growing behavioral health needs of Aurora's patient populations and increase access for community members, we hired, employed, and trained 12 new behavioral health providers in 2019.

### Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa

## A Special Place for Moms and Babies

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, severe maternal morbidity (SMM) increased almost 200% between 1993 and 2014, with significant disparities for women of color, uninsured and underinsured women, and women living in lower socioeconomic areas.



*Ascension St. Joseph hospital delivers more than 2,000 babies a year.*

To better understand why and see how Ascension St. Joseph could respond, we identified perinatal visit care as a key determinant in maternal morbidity. Women who do not get prenatal care are at risk for delivering low birth weight babies, or delivering babies prematurely, and for having undiagnosed conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. They also do

not receive regular screening tests, recommended vaccines or important education about self-care, healthy nutrition, exercise and what medications to avoid. We know once a woman has had seven or more prenatal care visits, the risk of her baby requiring a stay in a neonatal intensive care unit drops by more than half – falling from 29% to 12%

Our care team at Ascension St. Joseph tracked the reasons mothers miss these critical appointments and, with the assistance of a patient navigator and community health worker, help them overcome these barriers.

By identifying and responding to the social barriers women face to attend their appointments, and connecting them with resources, we have seen an increase in appointment attendance and healthier moms and babies as a result.

We continue to identify and respond to the barriers to care that women face and connect them with needed resources to help them achieve healthy outcomes.

Responding to needs with intention is core to who we are and this initiative allows us to engage directly with those in our community who are most vulnerable.

### Ascension St. Joseph Hospital, Milwaukee

## Injury Prevention for Older Adults

Our South Shore communities have a higher than average aging population. Milwaukee County's median age is 34.0 years, while South Shore resident median ages are 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.

Threats to an individual's safety can take many forms. The 2017 injury-related emergency department (ED) visit rate for Milwaukee County was 9,808.3 per 100,000. For Milwaukee County adults aged 80-84 years, the rate of injury related hospitalizations due to falls was 6,104.7 per 100,000 population. Additionally, of adults aged 65 years or older, one-third of them experience a fall each year.

To address this in 2019:

- 85% of our ED patients aged 65 years and older were identified for screening with the Identification of Seniors at Risk (ISAR) tool, 100% of those identified were screened and 100% of those screened who were identified as at-risk were referred to social services for additional support.
- 1 Stepping On falls prevention program was conducted with 5 participants. The Stepping On program offers older people information, strategies, and exercises to reduce falls and increase self-confidence.

Through specialized care and community outreach efforts, our hospital aims to ensure that older adults in our community receive support that promotes safety, function, autonomy, and dignity.

### Aurora St. Luke's South Shore, Milwaukee

## Active Parks Initiative

Aurora Medical Center in Washington County and Aurora Medical Center in Grafton co-lead an Active Parks initiative in partnership with Froedtert, the Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department, the West Bend Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department, and the Port Washington Parks and Recreation Department to offer outdoor mental wellness programs for 8 weeks in summer 2019. Although planning was well underway, the summer 2020 program sessions were unfortunately cancelled in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



*Walk with a Doc participating in a guided yoga session.*

Each 2019 Active Parks class session encouraged use of municipal parks and wellness education topics over the last two summers included aromatherapy, guided walks, meditation and yoga, among others. This joint initiative welcomed over 100 participants total during the eight sessions offered in summer 2019. Session locations varied but they were always held outdoors in a West Bend or Port Washington city park.

The Active Parks program falls under the Cultivate Wellness coalition and uses a public health framework to promote mental health and to eliminate stigma surrounding mental illness, while also supporting growing communities' resiliency. In addition to leading planning efforts, Aurora team members also shared responsibilities with the other partners involved to facilitate the sessions.

### Aurora Medical Center in Washington County, Hartford

## Advancing Student Knowledge

A steady job in favorable working conditions means more than just a paycheck. Employment can also mean a link to health insurance benefits for a family, the ability to pay for childcare services or education, and the opportunity to purchase

healthy, nutritious food. Unemployment, on the other hand, can lead to negative health outcomes such as a decline in one's ability to access care for themselves or their family members, development of depression or other behavioral health issues, or an inability to pay for basic living expenses. In 2018, the average unemployment rate in Milwaukee County was 6.35%, with a rate as high as 19.71% in parts of the City of Milwaukee.

Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center offers many health professions programs including radiology rotations, internal medicine clerkships, OB-GYN clerkships, primary care clerkships, and electives in ER, family medicine, osteopathic manipulation, many medical specialties, surgery, wound care and hyperbaric medicine.

Our team members remain committed to supporting health professions students of all levels from various programs seeking educational opportunities. This includes continuing education for emergency medical service (EMS) professionals. During 2019, we:

- Provided 5 EMS education sessions for 52 attendees.
- Conducted 13 Comprehensive Stroke Care educational sessions for 3,075 attendees.
- Facilitated a specialized disaster-planning educational session with 40 fire fighters trained.

By continuing to offer professional training and health professions education, our hospital is not only hoping to increase access to well-trained health professional for community members, but also to increase well-being and employability for the students we serve.

### Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center

## Helping Communities and Health Care Workers Fight Compassion Fatigue During Pandemic

As COVID-19 heightens stress on caregivers and parents, it is critical they take time for self-care and self-compassion in order to continue caring for others.

Through Rogers InHealth, Rogers Behavioral Health released three free compassion resilience toolkits geared toward parents and those in helping professions. The need to build resilience and fight compassion fatigue was identified as an opportunity in Rogers' community needs assessment, and the toolkit developed in response is proving invaluable during the pandemic.

The resources give parents and professionals the tools to care for themselves while acting with compassion toward family members, students, patients, and anyone else who counts on them for support. Participants practice skills to engage in



compassionate action as well as identify, prevent, and minimize compassion fatigue. It was created in partnership with DPI, Milwaukee Public Schools, other school systems, community mental health providers, youth serving agency leaders and parents.

The compassion resilience toolkit guides health care, education and other professionals back to the values and sense of purpose that initially drew them to their field. It also builds skills to manage expectations, set boundaries, institute cultural change, build relationships, and practice self-care – all of which contribute to high-quality, compassionate care.

Rogers has trained more than 600 individuals to facilitate their own compassion resilience groups with one of the three available toolkits. Additionally, Rogers released the “Compassion in Action COVID-19” video series and blogs that link compassion resilience to the realities faced during the pandemic, which have earned 20,000+ views and almost 20,000 page views.

### Rogers Behavioral Health

## Helping Patients Move from Coverage to Care

Understanding health insurance can be a bit overwhelming and confusing, especially if you’ve never had access to health insurance before. However, there are many ways you can make the most of it; From Coverage to Care (C2C) is an initiative, developed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services that has been implemented by Aurora Sinai Medical Center to help patients significantly impacted by their environment, social conditions, and other factors beyond their control better understand their health care coverage to receive the health and wellness services they need to live well.

The C2C program at our hospital utilizes intensive and systematic case management by an Aurora Family Service social navigator to support patients that have been identified as hospital Emergency Department high utilizers. The case manager works with the patient to enhance health care literacy, health care self-advocacy, and health care coordination to assist program participants in accessing primary care and establishing a meaningful relationship with a health care home where they can receive the preventive services that are right for them.

In 2019, 145 individuals received these intensive case-management services through Aurora Sinai Medical Center’s Coverage to Care program.

**Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee**

## Care Transition Nurses Transition Responsibilities According to Community Need

Our NICHE-certified Care Transition Nurses work to ensure that adults receive care that promotes function, autonomy, and dignity. During 2019:

- 217 older adults received transition services.
- 116 were referred to the West Allis Fire Department Community Paramedic Program, which works in conjunction with our Transition of Care program to fill a gap for high-risk patients when they are discharged, helping them to safely resettle in their home environment.
- 2 Stepping On sessions were held, with 24 individuals participating. The Stepping On program offers older people information, strategies, and exercises to reduce falls and increase self-confidence.

In 2020, the Care Transition nurses at our hospital and other Milwaukee County locations (18 in total) along with 15 additional redeployed nurses, joined efforts to support our community in a new way:

To help reduce burden on the frontlines in our local emergency departments, urgent care locations, and physician offices, this group of nurses:

- Rapidly developed a COVID-19 virtual monitoring program.
- Monitored discharged COVID-19 patients (confirmed and suspected) seen throughout our system for 14 to 16 days to assess their clinical and home situation.
- Educated patients on the most current information available using our COVID-19 Resource Center, the LiveWell app, and other tools.

This group of RNs remained connected with our highest risk chronically ill patients to educate them on COVID-19 and to ensure they could access their providers and other wellness resources virtually or by telephone so they could remain safe in their homes.

**Aurora West Allis Medical Center**

## Community Garden Provides Fresh Produce for Those in Need

When the seed for creating a community garden at Ascension Elmbrook in Brookfield was first planted, organizers had no idea what it would take to make it a reality.



*Ascension Elmbrook staff harvesting their bounty, September, 2020.*

“It was a true community effort. Many hands helped our garden grow and become successful,” said Valerie Shurley, Regional Clinical Nutrition Manager with Ascension Wisconsin.

It started with months of planning and consulting a master gardener with the UW Extension. Once the design and location were finalized, the Elmbrook team got to work. With financial support from the Islamic Society of Milwaukee Brookfield and a local boy scout who volunteered to build the garden boxes, team members were able to plant onions, squash, peppers and tomatoes.

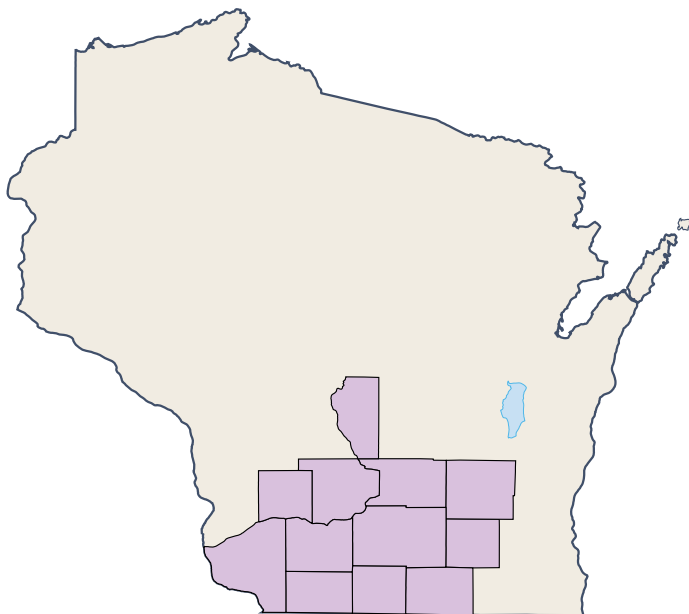
Gardening during a pandemic has its challenges and Shurley said the deer were especially hungry this year but despite the difficulties the garden flourished. Constant nurturing and guidance helped the plants thrive and produce nutritious vegetables for others to enjoy.

Several harvests throughout the summer and fall allowed the team to donate fresh produce to the Food Pantry Serving Waukesha County. “We serve about 500 families a week and our clients greatly appreciated the fresh, wholesome food the Ascension Elmbrook garden provided,” Laura Amenda, Food Resource Manager, for the Food Pantry serving Waukesha County.

The community garden is part of a broader effort to address the priority health needs in the community and achieve a meaningful impact. No one organization can affect substantial community change alone but as the Ascension Elmbrook community garden proves, working together helps a community blossom.

**Ascension Elmbrook, Brookfield**

# Southern Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:**  
**\$404,745,357**

## Charity Care

### Financial Assistance Relieves Stress

When a person becomes ill, their first priority should be their physical well-being. UW Health's uncompensated care program is there to work with patients who experience financial hardship related to their medical bills.

To help patients better focus on their health instead of financial situation, UW Health is proud to offer a financial assistance program to patients who are unable to pay for the care provided at UW Health. Patients work with dedicated staff members to apply for financial assistance to cover all or a portion of their bill. In FY19, UW Hospital and Clinics' financial assistance program provided \$16 million of charity care at cost.

This assistance comes as a major relief to these patients who have already gone through the stress of a medical problem. As one former patient wrote, "I knew I needed to seek medical help, but I didn't know how I could pay for it. I am so grateful for UW Health's financial assistance program for helping me with my medical bills. This removed so much stress from my life, and I was able to better focus on my health."

**UW Hospitals and Clinics, Madison**

## COVID-19 Efforts

### Home Pulse Oximeters for COVID Patients

With the number of COVID cases continuing to increase in the Fort HealthCare (FHC) service area, Madison Emergency Physicians (MEP), FHC's partner for emergency services, encountered a challenge to continually monitor COVID-positive patients who did not require hospitalization. What patients need is a home pulse oximeter so that they can report readings by phone follow-up to ensure their condition is not deteriorating and home quarantine remains appropriate.

The barrier for some low-income patients was the cost of a home pulse oximeter. MEP was aware that the equipment is not covered by insurance, even though it is medically necessary when prescribed by a physician. The cost at local retailers ranged \$65 to \$95. It did not make sense to send a COVID-positive patient to local retailer in search of equipment that might not be in stock. With so many devices on the market, ordering online for home delivery means the patient must be able to learn to use the equipment on their own.

FHC found a source to purchase home pulse oximeters for \$27 each. At this price, FHC determined it a cost-effective strategy to prevent further trips to Emergency, reduce in-patient care unless the condition worsened, and reduce primary care clinic in-person exposure to COVID patients. Standardizing use of one model of home pulse oximeters allows emergency staff to train patients how to use the equipment and record readings.

Fort Memorial Hospital Foundation is providing seed fund for 100 home pulse oximeters as a pilot for this

solution. Patients are given a home pulse oximeter at no charge and trained to use it before being discharged to home from emergency care. Patients keep a log of their readings for review by their MEP or primary care provider in the days following diagnosis.

From the very first patient, this program is reducing barriers for care in the COVID environment. An older adult who tested positive for COVID-19 was stable for discharge from the emergency department. Although outpatient management was appropriate, it was important to be able to ensure his oxygen level remained normal. The patient was given a pulse oximeter and trained to use it. The patient reported their appreciation that the device was easy to use and that FHC was making it easier for them to recover at home.



**Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson**

## Telemedicine Services Provide Needed Care During Pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic changed the world overnight, and brought about unprecedented challenges for health care providers, including how to meet the health care needs of patients while preventing the spread of the virus to both patients and staff.



As one of the largest health care providers in southern Wisconsin, it was imperative that Mercyhealth take action to ensure that its patients were still able to receive high-quality, safe and timely health care services. As in-person visits and elective procedures plunged at all of its hospitals and clinics, Mercyhealth quickly expanded its use of telemedicine technology to connect patients with primary and specialty care physicians for needed care, while also helping abide by Wisconsin's Safer At Home order.

Mercyhealth's telemedicine services allow the organization to provide safe, high-quality health care services using secure, live, on-demand video visits via computer, smartphone or tablet. They offer telemedicine for a wide variety of services, including new and follow-up physician visits, behavioral health counseling, urgent care and more. In addition, Mercyhealth found telemedicine technology a safe and effective option to screen individuals with COVID-19 symptoms without them having to leave their home.

At its peak, almost half of Mercyhealth's patient visits were being done virtually, with more telehealth visits taking place each week than it had conducted in the combined two years prior. This resulted in tens of thousands of telemedicine visits.

Satisfaction with Mercyhealth's telemedicine services is extremely high, with its virtual urgent care services receiving a rating of 4.9 stars out of 5 from patients.

**Mercyhealth, Janesville**

## Protecting First Responders with Proper Personal Protective Equipment

Sometimes in the health care world, small gestures of kindness can make a huge difference. When the COVID-19 pandemic surfaced, the emergency services team at Monroe Clinic, a member of SSM Health, saw a community need and jumped into action, working quickly to protect frontline first responders, including police officers and EMS workers.

Recognizing that the national supply shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) was impacting local first responders, Monroe Clinic knew they could make a difference and help responders who were using inadequate fitting N95 masks or had no PPE supplies. Anna Taylor, director of emergency services, and Mary Tessendorf, EMS & trauma coordinator, rallied their team and got to work. First, a team of ER staff and EMS personnel identified and coordinated a N95 Mask Fit Test for all local police departments and EMS workers in our region. Very quickly they fit tested over 300 individuals from 16 EMS services and other local units.



The emergency services staff then realized that EMS workers didn't have proper isolation gowns. The team partnered with a local church who purchased fabric and materials. Tessendorf and members of the Green County EMS were able to cut out 40 gowns and distribute to staff and members of the Mennonite Community to sew washable and reusable gowns.



"We took matters into our own hands to protect other health care workers, our friends, family and neighbors. I'm very proud of the Monroe Clinic's emergency service team; they got busy outside of our already hectic pace and proved that we are stronger together," said Taylor.

**Monroe Clinic, a Member of SSM Health**

## Drive-Thru Testing

"Hospitals treat patients with a variety of infectious diseases every day," said Jamie Hendrix, MSN, RN, vice president of patient care. "Our teams participate in ongoing emergency preparedness training to help us put systems in place to handle an influx of patients while keeping our healthcare providers safe so they may care for others. The spread of COVID-19 puts us on heightened alert to put what we know in place to protect and care for the communities we serve."

In response to COVID-19 testing challenges, Prairie Ridge Health set up a designated triage line and a COVID-19 outdoor drive-thru testing site to assist patients in our service area.



*Team Member at Drive-Thru Testing Site*

The drive-thru testing site, located on the hospital's campus, was up and running by March 16 and is open five days a week to serve the local community. The patient drives under a canopy and remains in their

vehicle. This provides protection from the elements, privacy, and convenience. In addition, the open air and limited contact increases safety precautions for our healthcare team, patients, and the community.

Prairie Ridge Health is monitoring the updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) daily and working closely with local public health officials, the Wisconsin Hospital Association and other health care partners to observe, plan, and respond to COVID-19. Since March 2020, the Prairie Ridge Health team has been working hard to ensure the safety of their patients, team, and communities.

"The situation is evolving every day," said Hendrix. "The key is to look the future and not the current moment so we can safeguard our patients, team, and the communities we serve."

**Prairie Ridge Health, Columbus**

## Meriter Increases Access for Behavioral Health Services Amid COVID-19

UnityPoint Health-Meriter quickly adapted to maintain and expand mental health services in its primary care clinics during the COVID-19 outbreak. Virtual options made it possible for increased patient visits the first half of 2020 compared to the last half of 2019.

Behavioral health patient visits:

- 1,492 from July to December 2019, all in-person clinic visits.
- 1,713 from January to June 2020, including 237 virtual visits.

UnityPoint Health-Meriter's NewStart addiction clinic also expanded patient care through virtual and telephone visits during the pandemic. A total of 1,363 phone and virtual patient visits occurred between March and June 2020.

Access to these vital services was critical during the pandemic and offering virtual options provided convenience to patients, decreasing the typical no-show rate.

"Our Behavioral Health team has been integral in providing access to necessary (and previously hard to find) mental health services for our patients, said Bridget Pribbenow, MD, Family Medicine, UnityPoint Health-Meriter. "Working as a team allows for better continuity of care."

**UnityPoint Health – Meriter, Madison**

## Re-imagining our Resources

When COVID took over everything at the hospital changed – including the need for our kitchen to prepare and provide large amounts of food on a daily basis. Our chefs at SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital - Madison quickly re-evaluated their inventory and adjusted food prep efforts to create individually packaged meals to be shared in the community.



*Chef Rachel helps provide freshly packed meals each week.*

Throughout the spring, our kitchen provided 50-100 meals (one or two times a week) that we then delivered to the Beacon (our homeless day shelter), the YWCA and Porchlight. Meals ranged from hearty sandwiches to meatloaf and potatoes, and fish or chicken served over rice and fresh veggies. It was wonderful to share this food that might have otherwise gone unused with so many staff working from home and no visitors at the hospital.

Additionally, when there was even more to share, our staff packaged family meals that could be shared with our Adopt a School partners weekly meal program.

“Our staff really enjoyed this creative outlet to give back – coming up with family- style taco kits, pasta dishes and even ham dinners with all the fixings at Easter,” said Chef John Marks.

During a time when the community rallied together to support our front-line staff with love and encouragement, it was truly incredible to re-imagine our extra resources and provide for those in need outside our walls.

**SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital - Madison**

## Stoughton Health Addresses Chronic Conditions Through Online Education



Autumn Kumlien, Stoughton Health's Clinical Dietitian

When COVID-19 hit, amongst all the challenges of this unprecedented pandemic, Stoughton Health recognized the need to continue to educate and connect with their community to address chronic conditions. Traditionally they had offered classes in person but needed to shift to a virtual format. They explored tools to see what was available to use and tested how to successfully implement those tools. Their first community online Zoom education class was on April 19. To date, over 180 attendees have participated in classes such as yoga, mindfulness, Healthy Living with Diabetes, Dementia, Managing Mental Health during a Pandemic, and more.

One popular online class offered by Stoughton Health is Living an Intermittent Fasting Lifestyle. This online class was presented by Stoughton Health's Clinical Dietitian Autumn Kumlien. Kumlien has been intermittent

fasting (IF) since the end of November 2018 with great success. She started out at 174 pounds and recently shared she is now down to a “healthy and comfortable” 137 pounds. Also following IF is her husband, a type 2 diabetic, down 87 pounds. His HgA1c went from 11.4 to 5.0 (a normal/non-diabetic HgA1c). Autumn's sister has chronic kidney disease stage 3 and after following IF her creatinine and GFR are now normal. Her physician asked, “What are you doing?” She replied Intermittent Fasting.

Intermittent Fasting is based on the New York Times Bestsellers, *Delay Don't Deny* and *Fast. Feast. Repeat* books by Gin Stephens. This online class was first offered in July 2020 and more than 70 registrants participated. It was so popular Stoughton Health has since offered the class in August and September 2020 and both classes had more than 40 participants for each.

IF, or time-restricted eating, is all about WHEN you eat versus WHAT you eat. In the world's leading medical journal, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, there is a review article (December 2019), called Effects of Intermittent Fasting on Health, Aging, and Disease. It outlines some of the benefits of IF:

- Results in “lasting adaptive responses” that allow us to resist cellular damage and a wide range of stresses.
- Has positive health effects on obesity, insulin resistance, hypertension, and inflammation.
- Improves memory and may halt the progression of neurological diseases.

The article also lists a wide variety of clinical applications for intermittent fasting: Obesity and Insulin Resistance, Cardiovascular Disease, Cancer, Neurodegenerative Disorders, Asthma, Multiple Sclerosis, Arthritis, Surgical and Ischemic Tissue Injury.

Stoughton Health plans to continue offering Intermittent Fasting again, along with all the array of other online Zoom classes as they work to reach and educate more of their community to help address chronic conditions.

**Stoughton Health, Stoughton**

## Financial Contributions for COVID-19 Response

UW Health quickly responded to the needs of the community through financial support as the COVID pandemic spread across southern Wisconsin. Their priorities ensured the contributions would:

- Benefit the most vulnerable in the community
- Support organizations trusted by members of these populations



*Collaboration and volunteerism make a difference in addressing food security in Beaver Dam.*

- Go to organizations able to effectively distribute resources
- Prioritize organizations with access to the fewest resources

As ramifications from COVID-19 spread, there was an exponential increase in the demand for resources. The financial support provided by UW Health allowed partners to rapidly respond.

Through this support, organizations could meet critical needs of the community such as distributing grocery store gift cards, paying cell phone bills so people could maintain their access to loved ones and the internet, and delivering formula and diapers to families in need. These organizations were well-trusted in the community and could reach people facing crises without access to other support.

Other partners adapted their traditional services to follow social distancing and “Safer at Home” orders. Some delivered food to seniors at home. Others offered culturally specific behavioral health resources over the phone as rates of depression and anxiety skyrocketed. Other organizations worked to provide safe spaces for people experiencing homelessness.

These proactive contributions were extremely appreciated. One executive director wrote, “My heart is bursting...You have no idea how much it means to receive this appreciation and support!” This financial support allowed non-profit partners to meet the growing demands across the community and innovate to continue reaching people in need during these extremely challenging circumstances.

**UW Hospitals and Clinics, Madison**

## ***Hospital-Supported Initiatives***

### **Partnerships, Collaboration Provide Innovative Approach to Food Insecurity**

Food insecurity is a community concern in Beaver Dam and to address it, community partners have come together to find an innovative solution in the form of a mobile food pantry.

The Beaver Dam Mobile Food Pantry and collaborators are making a difference and that includes Marshfield Medical Center-Beaver Dam which supports the project.

The Mobile Food Pantry began serving families in 2009 to provide immediate food assistance. Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin is a major partner and Trinity United Methodist of Beaver Dam coordinates and manages the pantry. About 50 volunteers set up the pantry one Saturday a month and food distribution is first-come first-served. There are no eligibility requirements.

The pantry has come a long way during these years. In 2018, an effort to find a new home for the pantry began. A search committee met at Beaver Dam’s Blue Zones Project Dodge County office to brainstorm options.

Blue Zones Project is a community-led well-being initiative designed to make healthy choices easier through improvements to a city’s environment, policies and social networks. Blue Zones Project is sponsored by Marshfield Medical Center-Beaver Dam in collaboration with Sharecare®, Inc., and Blue Zones, LLC. Dodge County is the first Blue Zones Project demonstration site in the state.

Among relocation priorities was a temperature-controlled facility. Moraine Park Technical College stepped up and now hosts the pantry at a climate-controlled site, making it a better community experience for families to have a safe and warm place to get the food they need.

### Marshfield Medical Center-Beaver Dam

## Fort HealthCare Virtual 5k Series Promotes Physical Activity During Pandemic

During the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, Fort HealthCare still wanted to offer the community heart-healthy activities that could be done safely with the entire family, with physical distancing in place.



Participants in the virtual 5k run series submitted pictures for social media

During the summer of 2020, the Summer Virtual 5k Run Series was implemented. This free series included four different “races” that were held one time per month between June and September. Participants completed a “virtual 5k”—meaning, they walked or ran 3.1 miles on a course that they chose or completed by treadmill. Once completed, they submitted their time to Fort HealthCare wellness staff and were put on a virtual leaderboard that tracked their overall place compared to all participants.

The summer series started as a single virtual 5k event over Memorial Day weekend. After over 100 participants registered and completed the race, the momentum and success of the event convinced Fort HealthCare’s Community Health and Wellness Team to create an entire series of races throughout the summer.

Staff noticed that as completion emails came through, it became apparent that the event was also giving people important motivation and encouragement toward living healthier lifestyles overall, and in some cases, even courage, to step outside of their comfort zone and do something they’ve never tried before.

The final completion numbers for each race were as follows:

- June: 138 race completions
- July: 128 race completions
- August: 124 race completions
- September: 113 race completions

A total of 503 individuals completed a virtual 5k over the course of the summer series. In addition to the individual event completions, there were 98 participants that completed all four races.

### Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

## Hunger Care

On average, 1 in 8 people in Wisconsin are food insecure, meaning that in the past 12 months they were worried food would run out before having money to buy more or the food they purchased did not last and they did not have the money to buy more food. Poor nutrition can lead to nutrient deficiencies, malnutrition and an increase of health concerns, such as high blood sugar, heart attack, heart failure, high blood pressure, depression, lowered immune function, dizziness/falls and poor overall health.



Prairie Ridge Health volunteers

Prairie Ridge Health and the Volunteers of Prairie Ridge Health partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank to provide heart healthy and diabetes-friendly food to individuals in the hospital's service area. The Hunger Care Program provides 30 lbs. of healthy, nutrient rich foods each month to help individuals manage their diabetes and heart health. Eligible recipients were screened for food insecurity, diabetes and heart health concerns.

"We started with 20 community members and were able to add five more recipients in December," said Rachel Selm, RDN, CD, clinical & community registered dietitian nutritionist.

Every month, individuals receive a food package containing fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, meats, low-sodium canned goods, and whole grains. Recipes using items in the food package are provided each month and the Prairie Ridge Health nutrition team is available for consultation. The Volunteers of Prairie Ridge Health staff the monthly pick-up day at the hospital.

"Together we can do so much more," said Selm. "Funding for the program has been approved for another year and we hope to add more recipients in the future."

**Prairie Ridge Health, Columbus**

## RAMC Supports Fitness Focus in Newly Renamed "Wellness Park"

In 2019, under the advisement of Reedsburg Area Medical Center (RAMC), the City of Reedsburg began installing pieces of fitness equipment along the paved walking path in (then) North Park. In January 2020, RAMC petitioned the city to rename it "Wellness Park" due to improvements that emphasize physical activity for all ages. The council unanimously agreed to the name change.



Wellness Park is located directly behind Reedsburg Area Medical Center and is an ideal place to install the equipment because it is accessible to people in all walks of life. Parents can exercise while watching their children play in the park, and benches are provided for those who need to rest while making their way around the walking path. RAMC Physical Therapist Jennifer Schneider assisted the city in choosing the most appropriate exercise equipment. Pieces that have already been installed include a multi-gym, an elliptical, a leg press, and a chest press machine. The multi-gym is used for exercises such as box jumps, dips, and pull-ups. More equipment will be available in 2020 and 2021.

Besides RAMC, several other area businesses and community organizations have donated towards the fitness equipment installation project. Wellness Park has also received a makeover with 16 new trees and new benches provided with donations from the Reedsburg Rotary Club. There is also a basketball court, playground equipment, and a picnic shelter in the center of the park.



"Our goal with the park is promoting physical fitness and making it accessible to the community at large," Schneider said. "The equipment can be used by anyone during park hours, seven days per week. The park is conveniently located near residential walking areas, senior housing complexes, schools, and the medical center campus. And it can be used absolutely free of charge."

RAMC is considering using the park space and equipment to hold fitness classes for youth and employees during the warmer months. Hosting community fitness classes and events may also be an option in the near future.

**Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg**

## Merrill Community Sharing Garden's Outdoor Classroom Doubles Output

For SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital – Janesville, the annual mini grant program has been a unique initiative in providing community-based organizations with financial support to address the health priorities identified through triannual community health needs assessment (CHNA). In 2020, the SSM Health mini grant program encouraged community-based organizations to apply for funds if addressing a Social Determinant of Health (SDoH) category, which can be attributed to 80% of health outcomes.



*Merrill Community Sharing Garden*

This year, Community Action, Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties (CAI) was awarded \$5,000 to expand the Merrill Community Sharing Garden in Beloit. Community Action, Inc. has been fighting poverty in local neighborhoods since 1965 with over 20 programs available in the two-county area.

The history of the Merrill Community Sharing Garden goes back nearly 13 years. In 2007, Community Action, Inc. launched the Merrill Housing Initiative, a neighborhood revitalization project targeting a five-block area of the high-poverty Merrill Neighborhood on Beloit's east side. Unfortunately, this area has faced significant drug and gang activity, loitering, and periodic violent crimes, has high unemployment and poverty rates, and is the most socially and economically challenged area in Beloit.

The Merrill Neighborhood is also a food desert which made them a perfect candidate to receive grant funds, not only for addressing food insecurity and access to healthy foods but also community inclusivity, changing the physical environment, and providing an educational opportunity for community members.

In early 2008, the Merrill project received permission from the owner of the vacant lot to plant a small 10'x10' garden. In 2009, the garden was expanded, and the Merrill Community Garden began. Since then, volunteers work side-by-side with local neighbors and the garden's produce is openly shared with the greater Beloit community. In 2019, the garden had over 700 food-producing plants being regularly harvested.

The Merrill Community Sharing Garden SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital – Janesville mini-grant application had a strategic plan to include building an outdoor classroom, increasing food production by adding a rain collection system, planting new fruit trees, establishing a new driveway and securing proper signage for the garden.

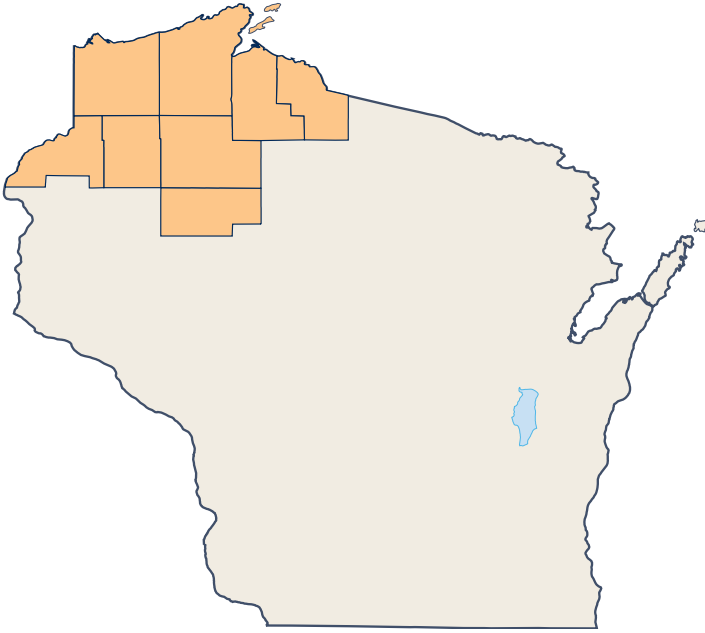
And then Covid-19 happened.

Even with the challenges that a pandemic creates, the Merrill Community Sharing Garden continued onward. To date, five of the six benches for the outdoor classroom have been built, the foundation is set, and the educational signs are around the structure. Four new fruit trees have been planted and the amount of food produced by the garden has doubled since last year.

The funding of the project has led to a greater level of health equity.

**SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital - Janesville**

# Vikingland Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:**  
**\$31,919,087**

## COVID-19 Efforts

### Continuing Care Despite COVID Challenges

Burnett Medical Center (BMC) is a 501(c)(3) critical access hospital and is the only hospital located in Burnett County, WI. BMC is comprised of 17 inpatient beds, a rural health clinic, and a 50-bed long-term care center. Since the pandemic, BMC has been doing everything it can to overcome these unprecedented challenges with the resources it has.



*Burnett Medical Center's Social Services Department is showing that "We are here for YOU!"*

The inpatient unit is being proactive and preparing to accommodate any active COVID patients by installing three more negative-pressure rooms. These specialized rooms prevent cross-contamination from room to room to keep other patients safe. This is one way to care for both COVID and non-COVID patients in a secure manner.

BMC's rural health clinic has added telehealth clinic appointments. With a Telehealth visit, patients can meet with a provider on their smart phone or other device while staying safe at home. This new service offers a safer alternative to receiving care, so patients do not need to wait until their symptoms/conditions worsen to be seen by a provider.

Furthermore, in the long-term care center, not allowing visitors to visit the residents has greatly affected their quality of life; however, we have adjusted to bring loved ones together. By purchasing laptops and tablets, this has allowed residents to visit with their friends and family members via virtual platforms. Window and patio visits are other ways BMC has been able to connect family members successfully while still abiding by the state's social distancing guidelines.

**Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg**

### Memorial Medical Center Provides Free Respiratory Fit Testing for Local Agencies

Memorial Medical Center (MMC), Ashland has a Respiratory Protection Program in place for staff and community organizations. This standard hospital program includes High Efficiency Particular Aerator (HEPA) mask education, Power Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR) education, and N-95 mask fit testing. Fit testing and mask safety training is necessary for anyone who is in a situation where there may be airborne diseases or other harmful airborne particles present, for instance pharmacists need to have this training for masking while they are mixing certain treatment formulas. During the mask fit training, a trained instructor spends 15 to 20 minutes with each individual to go through processes to place, remove, and test masks to make sure they are used properly and fit the person correctly.

Last March when COVID-19 cases began presenting in Northwestern Wisconsin, businesses and organizations were suddenly in need of more face masks and other personal protective equipment, like the rest of the nation. Dentists, oral surgeons and county services offices were trying to keep their employees up to date with their mask fit testing as well. Businesses wanted to make sure everyone was able to continue working safely while recognizing the potential threat of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Local businesses reached out to MMC with questions about masks, acquiring fit testing supplies, and how to get fit testing performed for their staff. Initially in early 2020, agencies had come to the hospital campus for fit testing, but with visitor restrictions in place, MMC decided to start a volunteer fit testing outreach service to accommodate businesses in the community. The hospital cardiopulmonary department director along with assistance from other hospital staff spent hours of their personal free time to help protect our fellow essential businesses and their customers.

Fit testing instructor Rob Jones says, “We wanted to help the people of our community be able to safely work in any environment where COVID-19 might potentially exist. This is just one of the tangible ways we are trying to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our area.”



As of September 2020, MMC had provided courtesy fit testing for more than seven organizations in their community. Requests for fit training are still being processed, and MMC will continue to provide this important service to the Chequamegon Bay region as long as is needed during COVID-19 pandemic.

**Memorial Medical Center, Ashland**

## Community First

Spooner Health is a licensed 25-bed critical access hospital in what is known as the Northwoods of Wisconsin. Serving a county of just over 15,000 people in a region known for its isolated beauty, a pandemic was the last thing this area expected. Right away though, the hospital and community members came together to start addressing key issues known at the time such as the personal protective equipment shortage, masks and the importance of staying home.

Day by day, community members donated surgical masks, safety goggles, gloves, gowns, shoe booties and other miscellaneous items. Hundreds of cloth masks were sewn by loving community members and although tough, there was rallying support for restricting the visitor policy and halting certain services.

As the pandemic swelled on throughout the summer, Spooner Health put on a virtual health fair to still deliver much-needed care to community members. A social media blitz included videos, service line information and community partner shout-outs. Free lab screenings were available and scheduled times filled up very quickly.

Additionally, Spooner Health held four community flu shot clinics, one employee and family flu shot clinic, and two school district flu shot clinics to provide a much anticipated and needed community benefit. Spooner Health delivered just as many flu shots as they had in past years and the response from the community was overwhelmingly grateful.

COVID-19 proved to Spooner Health that even in the midst of unknown challenges, the community has its unwavering support.

**Spooner Health, Spooner**

## Hospital-Supported Initiatives

### Washburn Elementary Gets Pedaling with All Kids Bike Program

“It’s as easy as riding a bike” now has more meaning to the students of Washburn Elementary School.

Thanks to the innovative efforts of Matthew Goodness, teacher of Elementary Physical Education and Elementary Adapted Physical Education, kindergarten students have the opportunity and equipment needed to learn to ride bicycles. Goodness established the All Kids Bike Program at the school.



*Washburn receives grant from Essentia Health for a fleet of Strider Bikes.*

After hosting several bicycle safety programs, Goodness realized that many of the students at Washburn Elementary did not have access to bicycles or had the opportunity to learn.

“In the past two years the physical education department has worked to expand its lifetime fitness options to include biking,” Goodness says. “I’ve been working to purchase a fleet of bikes to help all students gain the skills necessary to bike.”

Goodness learned about the Strider® Bike Company, which manufactures bicycles that can be adjusted as a child learns to ride. The company provides bicycles and a curriculum to support everything teachers need to teach children how to ride bikes, including teacher training and certification, a structured 8-lesson plan, a fleet of 22 Strider® 14-inch Balance Bikes, 22 Pedal Conversion Kits, 22 fully-adjustable helmets, and a five-year support plan.

Goodness proceeded to acquire the bikes by partnering with North Coast Cycling Association, the Washburn Parent-Teacher Association, Washburn School District, and numerous other individuals. Essentia Health provided a \$4,000 grant. Finally, after two years of planning, Washburn Elementary became the first school in Wisconsin to use the Strider® Bike program for bicycle education.

“The Strider® option helps the students feel secure because the bikes can be converted as they learn,” says Goodness. “I coached a student who was particularly reluctant to learn, and with this style of bike, she was starting to pedal by the fourth day.”

“Bikes are a right of passage for kids,” says Goodness. “Being able to hop on your bike to visit friends or go to the park provides freedom.”

[Essentia Health, Ashland](#)

## Teddy Bear Clinic Takes the Scare Out of Health Care

Marshfield Medical Center-Ladysmith providers and staff understand the importance of serving their unique rural communities through understanding area health program wants and needs.

One way the hospital responds to the community is by providing its annual Teddy Bear Clinic, held most recently in February 2020.

This special clinic gives children an interactive chance to learn and become more comfortable with health care. Through meeting staff, seeing hospital and clinic spaces and learning more about healthy living, children and their caregivers reduce fears of children accessing care when they need it most.



*Teddy bears getting check-ups help children be less afraid of health care.*

At the Teddy Bear Clinic, children receive stuffed bears and act as parents to the bears. They take their bears through each step of the stuffed animals' well-check visits, which includes weight, blood pressure and provider visit. Bears also went to radiology for X-rays, had blood draws, met with an anesthesiologist and visited surgery facilities to have broken legs wrapped.

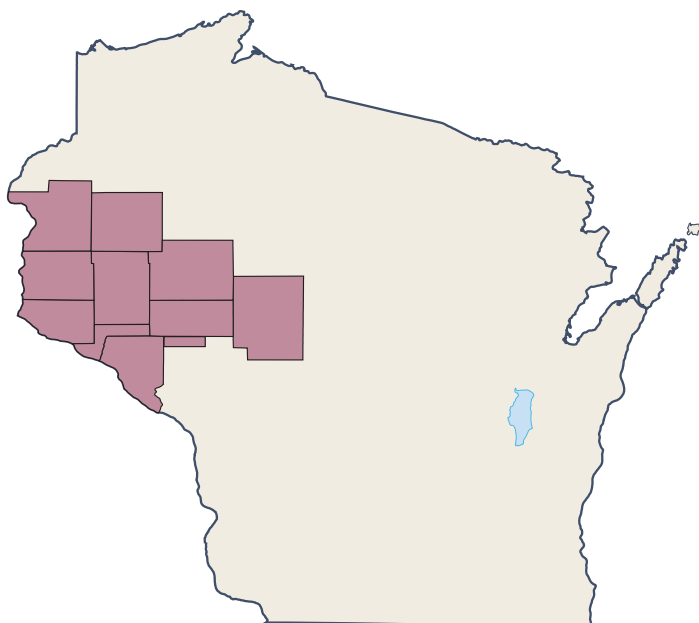
Children and their families also visited several educational booths.

A number of hospital and clinic departments and staff come together each “clinic” to provide a high-quality experience for children and families. For example:

- Children at one booth choose from different types of “play” food to put together a healthy plate of food for their bears to eat.
- Ladysmith Dental Center staff share activities that encourage tooth brushing and good dental health.
- Handwashing station staff demonstrate the importance of proper hand hygiene.

[Marshfield Medical Center-Ladysmith](#)

# West Central Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:**  
**\$81,223,410**

## COVID-19 Efforts

### Innovation, Technology and Community Partnerships Helped HealthPartners Hospitals Navigate Pandemic Response

Located in western Wisconsin, Amery Hospital & Clinic, Hudson Hospital & Clinic and Westfields Hospital & Clinic are part of the HealthPartners system of care. In addition to standard COVID-19 precautions, some of the innovative changes we made included

- Reducing the number of people on the hospital and clinic campuses, by:
  - » Transitioning many appointments to video or phone visits where appropriate.
  - » Temporarily suspending our in-center sleep studies and starting a mail-in process for patients to pick up and send back their at-home tests.
  - » Implementing curbside prescription pickup at our pharmacies.
  - » Introducing drive-up COVID-19 testing at Amery Hospital & Clinic.
- Supporting county public health departments with testing needs for contact tracing and collaborating with civic, business and citizen groups in the community pandemic response.



*Two members of staff with the colleague comfort kits at Amery Hospital & Clinic.*

- Implementing mobile check-in for in-person clinic appointments to reduce time in lobbies or patient waiting areas.
- Developing a text message screening tool to identify patients with COVID-19 symptoms before in-person visits.
- Partnering with local businesses, such as Love Your Melon, and community members who donated home-made masks, we distributed alternative masks to administrative staff and patients or visitors without their own face covering.
- Increasing well-being offerings to support colleagues' mental health. Options included comfort rooms and comfort kits for relaxation at Amery Hospital & Clinic, and emotional support and Tai Chi sessions with certified staff at Westfields Hospital & Clinic.
- Transitioning all our Make It OK mental health trainings to virtual.
- Producing podcasts with advice for adults and children experiencing pandemic-related mental health concerns.
- Developing and distributing a Community Resource Guide, that shares tools and resources for western Wisconsin families.
- Transitioning our PowerUp Teen Leadership Council (TLC) to a virtual model. The 2020-21 TLC launched with a diverse group of 24 students.

**HealthPartners - Amery Hospital & Clinic (Amery), Hudson Hospital & Clinic (Hudson), Westfields Hospital & Clinic (New Richmond)**

### Hospital Social Media Produces Physical, Mental Health Education During Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic put hospitals in the spotlight to take care of patients in the facilities and to make related physical and mental health education available to the public.

“As soon as COVID-19 was deemed a pandemic, our communications team went into overdrive creating educational content,” said Alyssa Van Duyse, social media specialist with HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital. “We used the CDC website as our source, paid attention to current events and the buzz surrounding COVID-19, and then we created social media posts that were intriguing and informational.”



HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital produced several social media posts a week to educate people about COVID-19.

Aside from washing hands and masking, an important part of HSHS Sacred Heart social media touched on not just physical health, but mental health during first few months of the pandemic.

“It’s not natural for people to isolate in their homes and rarely see others,” Van Duyse said. “One priority brought to light by our Community Health Needs Assessment is mental health. We wanted to make sure we were touching on self-care, inspiration, depression and suicide knowing that people may be struggling.”

HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital continues to share important, up-to-date health information on social media. Van Duyse says it is well received and the numbers suggest thousands of people are seeing the posts.

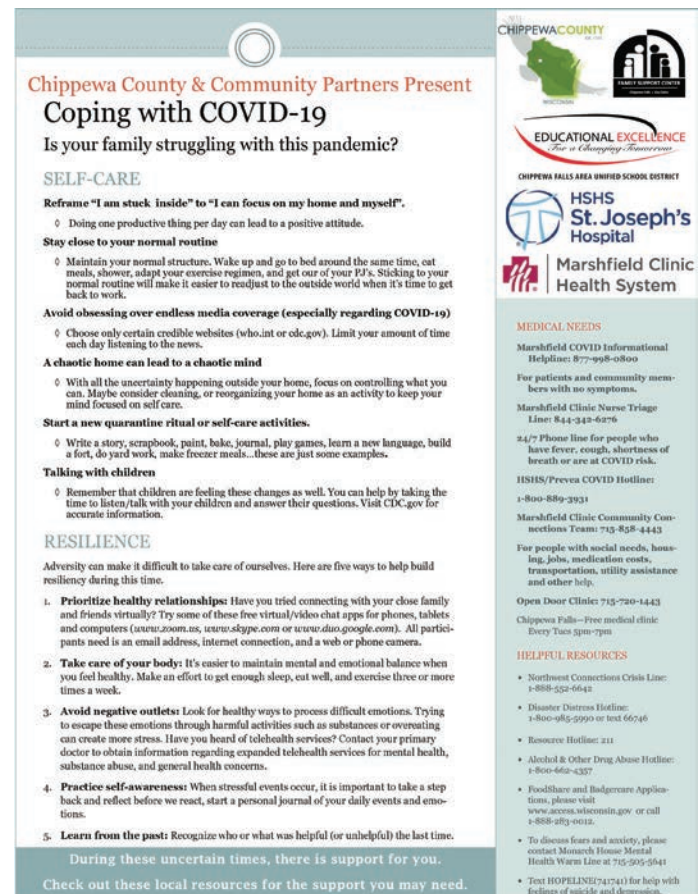
**HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire**

## Hospital, Local Partners Collaborate to Offer Document of Local Resources During COVID-19

Despite unprecedented pandemic conditions, community health colleagues at HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital in Chippewa Falls partnered with other health-related organizations in Chippewa County to produce education on COVID-19.

“People were struggling, coping with all of the uncertainty of COVID-19 – especially early on in the spring,” said Laura Baalrud, community health facilitator for HSHS St. Joseph’s and Sacred Heart hospitals. “We wanted to provide some information on self-care and resilience.”

Baalrud said she, in conjunction with community partners, were hearing that people who never used services such as food pantries needed to do so now because of COVID-19. And unfortunately, because of the pandemic, those local programs were limiting their hours. The group saw the need for a document with local resources.



HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital and its community partners produced local COVID-19 education for families struggling with the pandemic.

“When people are stressed, they don’t usually have the capacity to make many phone calls over and over to find services and changing hours of services,” Baalrud said. “So, our partner group divided up the phone calls and put this resource together.”

The resource includes tips for self-care, resilience, medical needs, mental health needs, food, transportation and employment resources. The resource pages are found on the Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District and Chippewa Falls Family Resource Center websites, as well as others throughout the community.

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

## Community Connections Team Meets People's Needs

Community Connections Team (CCT), connecting people in need with resources in their local communities, had seen a growing need for connection.



*Giving a helping hand is what Community Connections team members do, especially in this time of COVID.*

A community health program of the Marshfield Clinic Health System's Center for Community Health Advancement, CCT was founded in 2015 in the Eau Claire area, serving not only Health System patients but anyone seeking social need assistance. And, because of COVID-19, CCT has pivoted to meet changing needs and its ripple effect across Wisconsin.

Meeting needs begins during medical visits when patients are screened for insecurities in food, utilities, transportation, job search, childcare, health insurance, housing and more. Trained CCT volunteers assess patients and connect them with community resources to address underlying needs that can negatively impact their health.

Originally designed to engage with patients before or after medical appointments, CCT shifted during COVID to connect with them by phone after appointments.

In 2020, CCT served patients in more counties than ever and expanded outreach to partner with community agencies providing services to meet social needs across Wisconsin. Although food, transportation or childcare needs remained constant, requests for help with jobs, utilities and dental care increased during early months of the pandemic as safer-at-home conditions rapidly changed.

CCT Program Manager Trevor Begin said, "historically, in health care, a patient sees a provider and symptoms are treated. Patients follow a regimen and have follow-up appointments without factors outside clinical walls being considered. We recognize health also is impacted by social and economic factors that constrain people, including COVID."

[Marshfield Medical Center - Eau Claire](#)

## Mayo Clinic Health System responds to COVID-19 pandemic

2020 will forever be remembered as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the pandemic response, Mayo Clinic Health System activated the Hospital Incident Command System Jan. 31. Staff worked—sometimes around the clock, 7 days per week—to change how health care was delivered so they could safely provide health care to residents in communities across Wisconsin. Some of the activities included:

- Setting up COVID-19 testing sites—first as drive-through sites and later at indoor locations
- Implementing electronic and virtual options for families to stay connected to their loved ones while in the hospital
- Temporarily halting elective in-person care, vastly expanding video and phone appointments, and implementing safety measures so that in-person appointments and procedures could resume



*Nurses working the testing tent*

- Developing surge plans to accommodate a potential influx of patients with COVID-19
- Working with local health departments; advising educational institutions and businesses on safe practices;
- Educating staff and the public about COVID-19 and the ways people can protect themselves. In addition to sharing information through the media, Mayo Clinic Health System continues to post updated COVID-19 resources on its external website and in multiple languages and, to date, has published 72 articles on topics related to the COVID-19 virus. Mayo

Clinic Health System providers frequently serve as subject matter experts for presentations to local organizations as well as for regional and national media outlets.

With knowledge gained from the Mayo Clinic practice and research colleagues across the country, Mayo Clinic Health System can provide the most effective care possible to residents of the communities it serves.

### Mayo Clinic Health System-Eau Claire

## COVID-19 Drive-Thru Testing Response

Four days after the United States declared a national emergency due to COVID-19, St. Croix Regional Medical Center (SCRMC) created a drive-thru assessment in St. Croix Falls. SCRMC quickly acted to provide a convenient method of testing for COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Within a matter of days, the team had secured tents, heaters, developed methods for conserving personal protective equipment (PPE), and established testing protocols.



Patients could safely remain in their vehicles and medical staff would approach with key questions about symptoms, exposure, and recommend COVID-19 testing or other respiratory illness testing. If further treatment was recommended, patients could park and enter a separate entrance with a dedicated exam area and be provided a treatment plan or be sent to the emergency department if necessary. In addition to treating COVID-19, common conditions such as influenza and strep throat could be quickly identified, minimizing any additional contact with other providers or clinic staff.



SCRMC COVID-19 Drive-Thru Assessment Area Staff

ease. Through the end of September over 6,000 patients have visited the drive-thru assessment area.

SCRMC collaborated with other health systems and labs to process the tests and began quickly developing its own internal ability to efficiently analyze tests and provide results to patients. While SCRMC moved to an appointment-only drive-thru assessment area, we can still safely see patients with symptoms, exposure or needing pre-procedure testing at a time that is convenient for them.

In early November, SCRMC will be opening a state-of-the-art respiratory illness clinic that has a dedicated entrance and completely segregated air handling with complete air turnover every five minutes for aerosolizing procedures. This dedicated space will allow SCRMC to safely treat patients during the cold Wisconsin winters and help keep other patients safe.

### St. Croix Regional Medical Center, St. Croix Falls

## Western Wisconsin Health's Annual Community Open House Celebration

Although 2020 has brought many challenges, Western Wisconsin Health (WWH) wanted to continue the tradition of having a summer community Open House, with a twist! In June, just a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic, the Western Wisconsin Health team coordinated a Drive-thru Open House event for the community.



Maggie Cogbill, Director of Community Relations and Rosa Magnus, Development Manager, prepare bags for the Community Open House Drive-thru

In collaboration with businesses around the area, a recyclable bag was provided to community members, drive-thru style! The WWH Eatery prepared a variety of sandwiches and provided chips and desserts. Fresh bananas were supplied by Kwik Trip - Main Street, and cheese curds were purchased from Ellsworth Creamery. Bottled water and 1 lb. bags of carrots were generously donated by Nilssen's. Giveaways included hand sanitizer, lotion, flowerpots, Kwik Trip coupons, Adoray Treasures from the Heart coupons and more!

Nearly 300 families (700 meals) were served during a curbside pickup. A drawing for all registered participants was held to win a Mall of America Prize Package including hotel stay

provided by Thunder Country. Participants were also offered an inside look at Western Wisconsin Health through virtual department tours.

As we continue to navigate through our new world, we are constantly looking for new ways to connect with those we serve. Our next community event will be a Health & Wellness Expo with drive-thru pickup of a tote bag filled with items about our services, care partners and local vendors along with virtual provider presentations on a variety of women's and men's health topics.

### Western Wisconsin Health, Baldwin

## Free Clinics

### Menomonie Area Free Clinic

Over the past 15 years, the Menomonie Area Free Clinic has seen an overwhelming need for its services, alongside strong community support to provide outstanding care for patients. An incredible resource for those who have no health care alternative or are under-insured, the clinic strives to provide accessible primary health care and preventive health education for Dunn County and surrounding communities in Western Wisconsin.



*Volunteer Retired Nurses*



*Volunteer delivering materials*

The Menomonie Area Free Clinic is housed at Mayo Clinic Health System in Menomonie. With medical guidance from volunteer staff from Mayo Clinic Health System and other community health care professionals, the clinic served 500 patients in 2019. Led by over 200 volunteers who accumulated over 1,000 volunteer hours, the clinic provides basic health exams; medications; lab work; and referrals to eye, dental and radiologic services, as needed.

Seventy-four percent of the patients using the free clinic's services reported that they were employed, but, only two patients reported that there were offered insurance through their employer.

When asking patients how they would manage their health without the free clinic, some mentioned that they would not be treated, or would go to urgent care and get another bill they could not pay. For some, free medical care is truly a lifesaver and helps keep patients working, and caring for themselves and their families.

### Mayo Clinic Health System - Red Cedar, Menomonie

## Helping ALICE and Others!

ALICE is an acronym used to describe a person who is: Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed.



*Free Clinic of Pierce & St Croix County nurse, physician, and technologist volunteers*

The Free Clinic of Pierce and St. Croix Counties serves as a safety net to our friends, families and neighbors living one unexpected expense away from not being able to afford insurance premiums, co-pays or deductibles. It is a place to turn for primary medical care, medications, educational information and connections to other resources, free of charge.

Community support and collaborations are essential to the success of the Free Clinic. From the beginning in 2007, River Falls Area Hospital, part of Allina Health, has stepped forward as a collaborating partner. In addition to providing the human resource functions for three part-time staff, they also fund and provide medical imaging and laboratory diagnostics needed for the patients served.

The Free Clinic of Pierce and St. Croix Counties and River Falls Area Hospital, part of Allina Health, have a shared value to provide access to health care to an under-served population. The partnership is an outstanding example of working together to keep our communities healthy and thriving.

### River Falls Area Hospital, River Falls

## Hospital-Supported Initiatives

### Food Gleaning Program Benefits Thorp Food Pantry

Critical Access Hospitals are a vital part of rural communities across Wisconsin.

In addition to providing lifesaving health care services, these rural hospitals are also a major employer whose associates touch many organizations in their service area.

For residents of Chippewa and Clark counties, the Thorp Community Food Pantry provides services one day per month.

Ascension Our Lady of Victory Hospital in Stanley recently began supporting the Thorp Food Pantry with a Food Gleaning Program through its cafeteria.

“By packaging untouched food that would otherwise be thrown away, Our Lady of Victory is able to provide 200-300 donated pounds of food each month,” said Jane Bentz, director of community outreach for Ascension Our Lady of Victory.

The program is modeled after a similar program at Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital in Merrill. That effort started in 2018 and provides over 5,000 pounds of food to participants at the Merrill Community Food Pantry in Lincoln County.

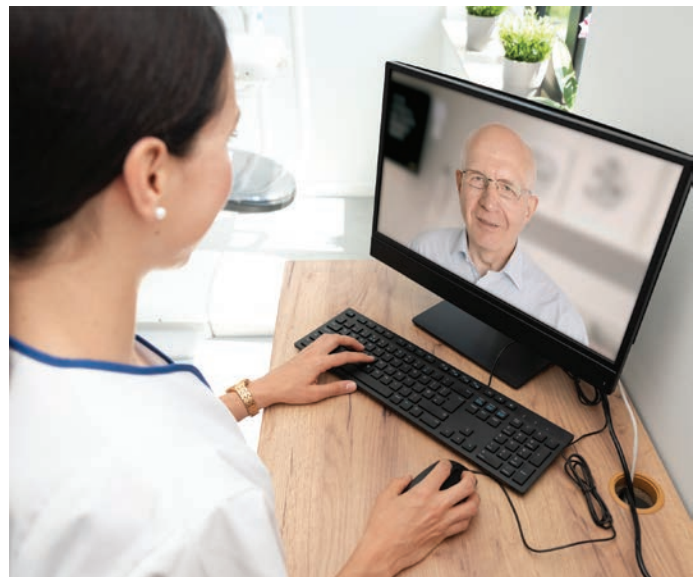
Ascension Our Lady of Victory replicated that program and also purchased containers for the food packaging.

[Ascension Our Lady of Victory-Stanley](#)

### Diabetic Prevention Program goes Virtual

Expanding on Cumberland Healthcare’s long tradition of educating the community naturally shifted this year. The year 2020 has been a catalyst for virtual care and that includes diabetic prevention programming at Cumberland Healthcare. Working with the Wisconsin Division of Public Health and the Chronic Disease Prevention Program, Cumberland Healthcare’s Diabetic Prevention Program has become one of only three accredited programs in the state to work toward virtual group classes and the first to begin offering them.

Virtual classes have allowed participants to continue to receive high quality education, support each other, and interact with healthcare professionals on a variety of topics to help them slow or prevent the progression toward diabetes. Since going virtual, class sizes have doubled, and attendance has remained near 100%. Participants report convenience and the continued opportunity to connect with others as the main contributors to improved attendance.



Cumberland Healthcare’s Diabetic Prevention Program is recognized by the CDC and approved for reimbursement by Medicare utilizing the Prevent T2 curriculum. There are currently only three healthcare systems in the state with both approvals and Cumberland Healthcare was the first to bill Medicare. This is a big win for Wisconsin. The first 12 months of the program consist of 26 sessions of education on healthy eating, physical activity, stress management, and problem solving through trained lifestyle coaches. Goals for individual participants are personalized and include achieving and then maintaining a 5-9% weight loss, successful attendance of sessions, and 150 minutes of weekly exercise. The program reduces the development of type 2 diabetes in at-risk individuals between 58-78% depending on individual factors.

Cumberland Healthcare continues to be a leader in improving the health and wellbeing of the community by collaborating with educators, community service, and business organizations. Cumberland Healthcare works 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 our patients in offering diabetes prevention programming virtually.

[Cumberland Healthcare, Cumberland](#)

### MMC-Neillsville Plays Role in Community Coalition Success

Beyond providing health care services in rural Clark County in Wisconsin, Marshfield Medical Center-Neillsville is a community resource and actively participates in leadership roles in community coalitions.

Hospital leaders believe collaborating with diverse stakeholders and including community members is critical to sustaining community initiatives.

For example, the hospital partnered with the Clark County Prevention Partnership and Mental Behavioral Health Taskforce to coordinate a coalition capacity-building process to strengthen county coalitions in addressing behavioral health and alcohol-and-other-drugs prevention.

On the same day as part of this coalition work, the hospital partnered with the Clark County Health Department, Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation and Northwoods Coalition to coordinate a town hall on underage drinking. Inclusion and cultural appropriateness were incorporated in the town hall, with a Spanish interpreter and childcare available to encourage the Latino community and families to participate in these important discussions.

Representatives from Clark County organizations, school districts and law enforcement, along with parents, students and community members, reviewed data from the county's Youth Risk Behavior Survey and participated in meaningful discussion on underage drinking in Clark County.

### Marshfield Medical Center-Neillsville

## Breaking the Mental Health Stigma in Barron County

Marshfield Medical Center-Rice Lake has partnered with a local coalition to present community events meant to bring awareness of mental health and suicide prevention to Barron County.



*Community presentations were held to bring awareness of mental health and suicide prevention to Barron County.*

The coalition, Community Connections to Prosperity, is a collaboration of many area organizations and individuals that all share a common goal – to improve the lives of neighbors by reducing poverty. Community Connections to Prosperity helps individuals, organizations and agencies understand and deeply appreciate the immense power of poverty and issues connected to it, including mental health.

A month-long series of community events targeting mental health and suicide awareness began with an education event at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College in Rice Lake. Audiences included community members, local governmental staff, local school staff and health care providers who learned much about mental health and its impact on their community, organizations and residents.

Psychiatrist Dr. Brenda Kibola, who practices at Marshfield Clinic Health System's Rice Lake Center, discussed depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder and talked with the audience about how to break the stigma by understanding mental health.

The series was followed by two community Question Persuade Respond suicide prevention trainings and two showings of the film *Suicide: The Ripple Effect* at Cumberland and Rice Lake high schools. The film follows Kevin Hines' personal journey and the impact his suicide attempt had on him and those around him.

Event attendees also received information about local mental health resources and upcoming mental health events in Barron County.

### Marshfield Medical Center-Rice Lake

## Chippewa Falls Tiny Homes

Mayo Clinic Health System-Chippewa Valley donated \$8,500 to the Hope Village to build a tiny home. The funding enabled Hope Village to build one tiny home which can hold up to three people.

Hope Village, a small community of tiny homes near downtown Chippewa Falls, provides short-term and long-term housing and services to people who are homeless in the Chippewa County. In 2014, due to lack of funding, the county's only homeless shelter closed their doors and the county has seen an increased need to support the homeless. Hope Village provides mentors and life coaches to help guests get back on their feet by creating secured living plans with guests. Plan goals include employment, financial stability, long-term housing and support for any health needs.



*Mike Cohoon, Pastor*

Hope Village is working on constructing a unit that can hold up to six people. The goal is to add four homes for a total of 12 tiny houses in Chippewa Falls.

“Housing is a major contributor to overall health and stability in life,” said Sara Carstens, director of Community Engagement for Mayo Clinic Health System. “The Tiny Homes program is an innovative idea that has garnered significant community support in Chippewa Falls.” Mayo Clinic Health System is proud to support Hope Village, which is a wonderful example of a community coming together to ensure everyone living in Chippewa County has a safe and secure place to call home.

#### Mayo Clinic Health System-Chippewa Valley, Chippewa Falls

### Barron County Court Appointed Special Advocates Program

Mayo Clinic Health System-Northland donated \$16,500 to the Court Appointed Special Advocates Program.

This program enlists citizen volunteers to champion the needs of children who are abused and neglected, and are unsafe at home. These children must live temporarily under the jurisdiction of the courts and the supervision of a county child welfare system.



From Left, Mary Olden, Vice President; Hon. James C. Babler, Barron County Judge; Laura Sutton, Secretary

This donation will support training 11 volunteers at a cost of \$1,500 per volunteer. As a result, this donation will support children in the foster care system.

The Court Appointed Special Advocates

Program, which is new in western Wisconsin, is innovative in its approach. It's a creative and evidence-based model for supporting foster children and helping support their resiliency during a time of incredible strain.

Children who have experienced abuse or neglect fare better with a Court Appointed Special Advocates Program volunteer by their side, and they are more likely to find a safe, permanent home, more likely to succeed in school, and half as likely to reenter the foster care system. Volunteers work for the judges and are the only volunteers under Wisconsin law to serve as sworn friends of the court.

Volunteers are assigned to one child for the time that child is in the court-appointed child welfare system. Volunteers function as mentors and advocates until such time as the children they are assigned to are safe at home, or a safe and permanent home is found for them.

Mayo Clinic Health System is proud to support mental health efforts in Barron County.

#### Mayo Clinic Health System-Northland, Barron

### Mondovi Public Library

As part of its commitment to rural communities and reducing health disparities, Mayo Clinic Health System-Oakridge contributed \$100,000 to the Mondovi Public Library capital campaign. This contribution supports Mayo Clinic Health System's aim at innovative and strategic local population health improvement efforts.



from left: Two Mondovi Public Library Board Representative; Kaitlyn Noack, Director of the Mondovi Public Library; Dr. Stoughton; Sara McCune; Dr. Rich.

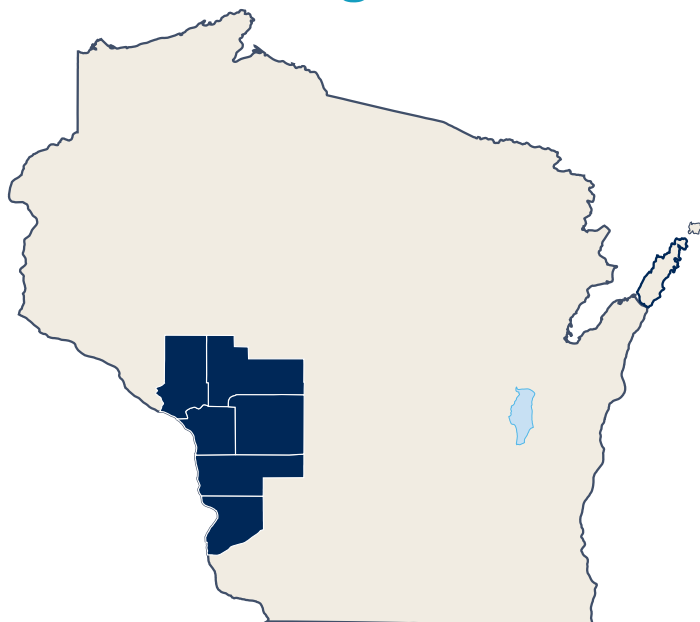
Much of the library is not accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Part of the financial gift will help make the building more accessible.

Public libraries are trusted institutions that have broad population reach and untapped potential to improve population health through expanded virtual care options. As a primary resource in many communities, library staff provide referrals and support to vulnerable populations, including people who are homeless, people with mental illness and substance abuse issues, recent immigrants, and children and families experiencing trauma.

Northwest Wisconsin is aiming to harness strategic partnerships with local public libraries as a powerful opportunity to serve rural populations in new ways, including expanded virtual care options. Mayo Clinic Health System hopes this investment will benefit many community members in and around the Mondovi area.

#### Mayo Clinic Health System-Oakridge, Osseo

## Western Region



**Total Region Community Benefits:**  
**\$144,413,151**

### COVID-19 Efforts

#### 6,000 Face Shields from Scratch

In early March 2020, Gundersen Health System occupational therapist Nathan Jordan's job was helping patients fit and adjust their wheelchairs.

He soon became one of dozens of team members redeployed to equip Gundersen frontline staff with gear to shield them from COVID-19.

"This wasn't in my job description," Nathan says. "This wasn't on the radar."



*Gundersen Health System staff formed an assembly line to make more than 1,100 face shields in two days.*

There weren't enough face shields for the Gundersen Orthotics and Prosthetics staff members tending to patients in the Hospital.

"We saw a shield and said, 'Well, we can make those,'" says John Barteck, lead orthotist.

The team reached out to vendors for the raw materials needed to assemble face shields. Staff mobilized and volunteered in an assembly-line to produce 1,156 face shields in just two days. More than 6,000 face shields were produced in total.

"This project is an example of the innovative nature and resilience of our team," says Rachel Albrecht, Gundersen administrative director. "The way people were able to come together to get this ready to go quickly and efficiently is just a testament to the dedication and passion of our team to help in any way we can."

**Gundersen Health System, La Crosse**

#### Using Ingenuity to Keep Staff Safe

A little ingenuity and imagination can go a long way in time of need. Tomah Health staff used a bit of both to build a portable bed anti-aerosol hood to protect staff in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.



*Tomah Health Emergency Services director Suzanne Downing, DNP, RN, left, and hospital Facility Services coordinator Steve Logging test a newly designed portable bed anti-aerosol hood using a mannequin. Downing and Logging developed the unit to protect staff in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Tomah Health Emergency Services Director Suzanne Downing got the idea for the hood from a YouTube video that a Taiwanese anesthesiologist developed showing how to protect staff from potentially infectious airborne particles while providing routine care to patients who cough during procedures like intubation, ventilation and nebulizer treatments.

"After viewing the video, I thought we could have something like that to use if we needed it," Downing said.

Together with her 11 yr. old daughter, Emme, Downing got to work in her dining room and built a prototype out of cardboard that she then shared with Tomah Health Facility Services coordinator Steve Logging.

With a few tweaks and input from front-line staff, the two came up with the final design using PVC pipes, plastic film and a sheet of Lexan, which is a polycarbonate resin thermoplastic that is stronger than glass, but flexible to cut and easy to clean. "At first I thought the sample would be too heavy, so we bounced some ideas around and came up with the final design which takes about 45 minutes to assemble," Logging said. "They are really simple to make."

"I've never seen anything like this prior to this pandemic," Downing added. "It kind of resembles a croup tent used with children treated with nebulizers, but I have not seen this until this pandemic hit. People are kind of feeding off each other's ideas on what works and what doesn't," she said.

Logging said they made four of the hoods that can be reused after cleaned and new plastic sheeting is installed. "Each one cost us roughly 40 something dollars to make, not including labor time," Logging added. "We have a template and can knock them out rapidly if we need more."

Downing said front-line staff was instrumental in the project. "They really liked it and they're excited to have a protective piece of equipment like this," she said.

Even though hospital staff has not had to use the new hood, Downing said they have them available for use in surgery, acute care and emergency departments if the need arises.

She added that Tomah Health would be willing to share the idea and plans with other medical facilities looking to provide a safeguard for staff. "If there are any other health care facilities that are looking for something like this, it is easy and relatively cheap to put together," she said. "It's all new to everybody and we're taking the best ideas that we can find and trying to make them better so we can keep our staff safe."

**Tomah Health, Tomah**

## ***Hospital-Supported Initiatives***

### **Youth Coloring Project Infuses Hope**

Black River Memorial Hospital (BRMH) is encouraging children of all ages to take part in its new coloring campaign called "Infuse Hope." Later this fall, chemotherapy will be available for patients at the new Infusion Center, and the coloring campaign is designed to help spread love and hope to local patients undergoing treatment. By simply participating in this campaign, you will be "infusing hope" to local patients who are facing a very difficult journey.

Completed artwork will be shared with patients during each visit. Cheri Everson, BRMH obstetrics director and Infusion Center coordinator, encourages youth to participate.



*Help infuse hope with patients receiving chemotherapy.*

"Patients who are undergoing infusion treatments appreciate having distractions, especially ones that bring a sense of joy," she said. "Sharing this artwork with those who are going through such a difficult time will be very therapeutic and will help reduce their anxiety."

Additionally, an inspirational video has been produced featuring local children to share with patients. The video can be viewed here [www.brmh.net/services/infusion-center](http://www.brmh.net/services/infusion-center).

Coloring pages can be downloaded from [www.brmh.net/infusehope](http://www.brmh.net/infusehope) or can be picked up at the hospital. To engage the community in this campaign, drop-boxes and coloring pages were distributed around the community at a child daycare, a local grocery store, the public library, and a local lending institution. Aside from using one of the area drop-boxes, coloring pages also can be scanned and emailed to [excellence@brmh.net](mailto:excellence@brmh.net).

**Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls**

## **Community Collaborates on Trauma Informed Care**

Gundersen Tri-County Hospital and Clinics began screening patients for social determinants of health in 2019. This work expanded in 2020 to include community partners and relationships critical to positive care and impact on patients and community.

The Resilient and Trauma Informed Care community group within Trempealeau County provides a safe place

for community partners to gather on the topic of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma informed care. Along with Gundersen Tri-County providers, the group brings to the table teachers, daycare providers, religious leaders, human services workers and private businesses around the topic of resiliency and trauma informed care.



One of the bunk beds on display.

Community partners coming together on this topic increases awareness and knowledge, with a goal of lowering the risk of long-term health effects within the county. The group is speaking with a common language, shifting from asking “what is wrong with you?” to “what happened to you?”

During Healthcare/Hospital week Gundersen Tri-County employees donated time and funds to help build 20 bunkbeds for the Trempealeau County Sleep in Heavenly Peace effort, for children who did not have beds to sleep on.

**Gundersen Tri-County Hospital and Clinics, Whitehall**

## Mayo Presents Inclusive Health and Recreation Awards

In 2019, Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse (Mayo) provided financial support to programs and initiatives that benefitted people with cognitive or physical disabilities, especially children, through its Inclusive Health and Recreation Awards. Community members from Mayo’s service area were invited to submit their requests to receive full or partial funding.



Award recipients of the Inclusive Health and Recreation Awards

"It can be challenging for individuals with disabilities to be as physically and socially active as they desire," says Teri Wildt, director of Community Engagement at Mayo Clinic Health System for Southwest Wisconsin. "In making these funds available, we hope to promote greater engagement of all people in our communities. We want health and well-being to be attainable for everyone."

Mayo Clinic Health System announced awards to 13 organizations, totaling \$195,000 in funds ranging from \$500 to \$70,000.

"All the proposals we received were impressive. In the end, 13 received either full or partial funding," Wildt says. "We were really pleased with the different types of proposals funded, including requests to expand adaptive sports and recreation programs, provide adaptive equipment, create a new pasture to support a riding program, install a new low-profile launch pier for paddled watercraft, and equipment for new inclusive playgrounds across the region."

**Mayo Clinic Health System - La Crosse**

## Mayo Donates to Lids for Kids

Mayo Clinic Health System in Sparta (Mayo) was a co-sponsor of the “Lids for Kids” program, coordinated by the Sparta Kiwanis. This program provides Snell-certified bike, skateboard and scooter helmets to students at Sparta School District Elementary Schools.

Children and their families can purchase a safe helmet for just \$3 per helmet to improve safety and prevent traumatic head injuries. Information was also provided to each student detailing the benefits of wearing a helmet and the risks involved if helmets are not worn. Over 890 students, family members and teachers participated in this program in 2019.

**Mayo Clinic Health System - Sparta, WI**

## Tomah Health Community Foundation Aids Lend a Hand Program

Imagine being taken to a hospital by ambulance and then realizing you have no way to get back to your home after being treated. For some area elderly patients and those who are homeless, the situation is real. That’s why the Tomah Health

Community Foundation has donated \$1,000 to help fund the Lend a Hand program at Tomah Health.

"It's wonderful and we're very appreciative of their (foundation's) support and helping these patients in our community to assist them when they are in their biggest need," said Tomah Health Patient and Family Services social worker Kaelyn Laylan, CSW, who helps to coordinate the hospital assistance program.

The Lend a Hand program was started two years ago when hospital officials recognized a growing need to assist those who had no resources. "Our most used resource is transportation; rides back from the ER (emergency room)," Laylan said. "A lot of times patients are brought in via ambulance and then need a ride back home."

She said the foundation's support will help to fund the program which in turn helps officials purchase gas gift cards for those in need. "We've also had patients who are homeless, and we've given them gift cards to purchase clothes, food and sometimes we'll help with medications if needed," Laylan said. "We find a lot of patients who just don't have money on them when brought into the hospital or don't have friends or family in the area to help."

Over the past year, the program has assisted 100 patients including 88 requiring transportation, eight who needed help with medications and four who needed clothing.



*Tomah Health Community Foundation vice president Brian Eirschele, left, presented a \$1,000 ceremonial check to Tomah Health Patient and Family Services social worker Kaelyn Laylan, CSW, to support the hospital's Lend a Hand program.*

This year's donation is the second consecutive year the Foundation has supported the program. "We thought it was really wonderful that we could help people out with, for instance gas money, for them to be able to get to the hospital or to get back home again," said foundation vice president Brian Eirschele. "It just seemed like such an obvious consideration for those who are in need and allows us to help reach out to people who are less fortunate, perhaps, in our community that need help and assistance."

**Tomah Health, Tomah**

## Robotics and Occupational Therapy Changing Lives

Vernon Memorial Healthcare (VMH) has a history of collaboration and support with the communities it serves. In June 2019, VMH collaborated with Westby High School Robotics Team to give Tucker, a local boy with a rare disorder called "15q Duplication Syndrome-Isodicentric Type", the chance to laugh and enjoy play time that other children are able to do.

Go Baby Go is a national, community-based research, design, and outreach program that provides modified ride-on cars to children (birth to age three) who experience limited mobility. Working with Go Baby Go and through the dedicated time, safety and movement knowledge of VMH Occupational Therapy staff, as well as the knowledge and technology skills of the Westby High School Robotics Team, Tucker was gifted a fully functioning toy car he is able to drive and enjoy movement he wouldn't normally be able to do on his own.



*Tucker enjoying his "Go Baby Go" car*

This was not only a great outcome for Tucker, but also allowed the students to see how their work in robotics could help changed the future of medicine. VMH Occupational Therapy Manager, Amy Evenstad said, "For our OT department, this was an opportunity to collaborate with high school students in a whole new way. By creating a summer school class centered around the project, students were introduced to healthcare and biomedical engineering careers in a functional and practical manner. We are able to educate on health careers and provide hands-on learning related to disabilities and adaptive play."

The full story of this collaboration can be found at [www.vmh.org](http://www.vmh.org).

**Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua**





