

Lakes Regional Healthcare Health Happenings

November 2023



A Birth Story: Blake

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Healthcare**

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Follow Us on Social Media

Stay up to date on what's happening at Lakes Regional Healthcare by following us on social media! We also love it when people post messages to us – we're always looking for feedback on how to improve the care experience!

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Lakes Regional Healthcare is
an Avera Partner.

Message From the CEO

Partnerships and collaboration are the keys to success in maintaining viable healthcare organizations. As you most likely are aware, Lakes Regional Healthcare (LRH) has an affiliation with the Avera Health system in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Partnerships and collaborations take on many forms and we often have people ask about our relationship with Avera. We thought we would take some time to discuss as many people see us as one organization which is not entirely accurate.

In 2013, LRH entered into an affiliation agreement with Avera Health. There are three types of arrangements hospitals can have with Avera: owned, leased, or managed. The arrangement we have with Avera is managed. When we entered into our relationship with Avera Health, we considered affiliating with several different health systems. The LRH Board of Trustees was very clear that “local control” of the organization had to be retained. This eliminated partnerships with certain systems who preferred a more centralized approach.

At the time of the affiliation, there was a great deal of conversation in Congress about the importance of “integrated health systems.” That, coupled with our already joint ownership of the local family medicine clinic and a need to replace our electronic medical record (EMR), lead us to the Avera relationship. Equally important was Avera’s commitment to rural healthcare, their values of compassion, hospitality, and stewardship, and their support of allowing us to retain “local control.” Neither organization takes on the financial risk of the other and LRH staff remained employed by LRH.

There are several benefits to our relationship with Avera Health. We are better able to collaborate with them regarding patient care, we attend meetings with others in the same positions as ours to learn and get more ideas, and we have access to Avera resources such as legal, marketing, finance, and patient care areas. We participate in Avera’s group purchasing organization which enables us to purchase any number of items at much lower costs due to the collective size of the system which allows us to leverage pricing and to obtain stronger contracts with insurance companies.



Information Technology (IT) is another key strategic reason for the affiliation. IT is very complex and expensive and having an integrated EMR that can be viewed by a variety of treating specialists across sites of care improves outcomes.

We continue to appreciate our relationship and have seen the benefits of it – we’ve improved continuity of care for all patients, decreased costs for patients and LRH overall, and have better positioned the organization for changes that are constantly occurring in the health care industry.

Although we are continually evaluating various strategic initiatives to best position ourselves now and into the future, we take great pride in retaining local control of decisions impacting the people of the Iowa Great Lakes region. We have no immediate plans to change the nature of the relationship but are grateful for the partnership with Avera and believe it to be mutually beneficial for both organizations and in the best interest of our patients and the community.

If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas, I am always happy to visit. You can reach me at (712) 336-8795 or via email at jason.harrington@lakeshealth.org.

Jason C. Harrington, FACHE
President & CEO



A Birth Story: Blake

You may have heard that labor gets easier with each child you have. This isn't always true, as Sadie Schindler - Algona resident and mother of five - attests. "My first two pregnancies were easy. I had minimal discomfort. But then I had quite a bit of morning sickness with my third and fourth pregnancies and heartburn during my fifth pregnancy," she said. "Labor was fast with each of them, but I ended up having an emergency c-section with my fourth and a scheduled c-section with my fifth."

Vaginal deliveries after cesarean, or VBACs, have a higher risk of uterine rupture and other complications and are often done at tertiary hospitals, such as Avera McKennan in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Lakes Regional Family Medicine physician and Lakes Regional Healthcare (LRH) Obstetrics Medical Director Dr. Zach Borus said, "We take several things into consideration

when determining whether to do a cesarean, such as fetal distress, the baby's position, and concerns regarding the placenta and umbilical cord. We are proud of our low c-section rate, which is testament to our OB team's patient-centered, evidence-based approach."

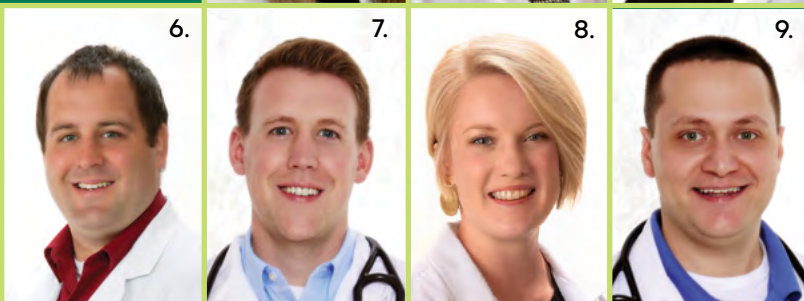
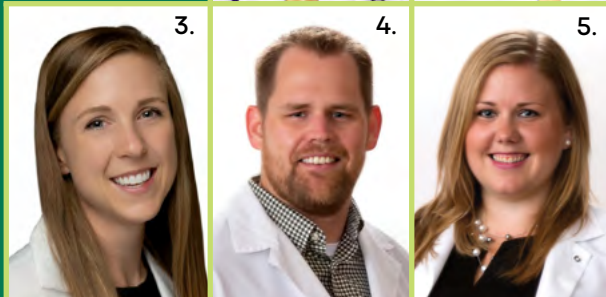
Sadie's doctor, Dr. Mara Groom, informed her VBACs are not done at LRH. However, delivering her baby at LRH was important to Sadie. When she delivered her first child, she lived in Spirit Lake. "I loved it so much that I wanted to continue my care there," she said. "I feel like when you have a doctor and really like them, you should stick with them." For this reason, Sadie delivered all her children, including her fifth - a baby boy named Blake - at LRH despite moving to Algona in October 2014.

Her experience delivering Blake was just as positive as her four children beforehand. Her cesarean section was scheduled at noon, and she arrived at 10:00 am, got IVs started, and had time to relax. "I met with anesthesia and Dr. Kalkhoff, who performed the c-section. He was very professional and made me feel comfortable. All the staff there – lab techs, RNs, doctors, everyone is so friendly, and the OB unit is comfortable and modern. I felt safe in their care," said Sadie. "The process was smooth, the staff was friendly and accepted my decisions, the healing was wonderful, everyone was happy. There was no way to make it any better."

As the mother of five children, Sadie has a lot of experience from which to draw when giving advice about labor and delivery. The main piece of advice is to go in with an open mind and realize things can change quickly during labor. "You need to go with the flow, listen to your doctors, listen to your body and motherly intuition," she said. "Don't feel like you failed if it doesn't follow your birth plan. What's most important is a healthy baby in the end." ■

Local Providers That Deliver

These family medicine physicians provide obstetrical care at Lakes Regional Healthcare and can all be reached at 712-336-3750.



- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Zach Borus, MD, MPH | 6. Mike Kalkhoff, MD |
| 2. Craig Cunningham, MD | 7. Andrew Mueting, DO |
| 3. Christine Fricke, DO | 8. Whitney Nelson, DO |
| 4. Averill Fuhs, DO | 9. Steve Vander Leest, DO |
| 5. Mara Groom, DO | |

Planning to Have a Baby?



Becoming a parent is an incredible miracle – but it can also be stressful. We are providing this free, 28-page guide to quickly answer your pregnancy questions, from prenatal tests to car seat installation. In *Having a Baby: Your Complete Guide to Pregnancy*, you will discover the first signs of labor and how much fetal movement you can expect in each trimester. This downloadable e-book answers common questions from every stage of your pregnancy journey.

This complete guide to pregnancy covers:

- Tests and screenings you can expect
- How to perform daily activities, such as exercise, while you are pregnant
- How pregnancy will and won't impact your ability to work
- Which complications you should be alert for
- How to talk to your doctor about your pregnancy
- What to expect during delivery and childbirth
- Much more!

Download this free e-book now to answer your pregnancy questions so you feel more comfortable and confident welcoming the new addition to your family. Just hover over the QR code shown and click on the link that appears.



How Quality and Service are Measured in Healthcare

Healthcare is vitally important. That's why where you choose to receive healthcare services matters. It's also why we are proud to be rated as a five-star hospital by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Their Care Compare program reports on quality measures for over 4,000 hospitals nationwide each year. Roughly 10% of hospitals this year were rated five stars, which is the highest possible rating, and Lakes Regional Healthcare is the only hospital in the western half of Iowa, and one of five Avera-affiliated hospitals to receive this five-star rating.

There are several steps involved in CMS's rating determination. First, they mandate that all hospitals, including specialty and VA hospitals, submit data to their quality program. This data includes various measures

such as the number of surgical site infections, the rate of readmission after a hip or knee surgery, and the death rate for stroke patients to name just a few. CMS receives hundreds of measures from each hospital. After they are received, CMS identifies which measures will be used to calculate the year's star rating. Each year the measures used change, which ensures hospitals take steps to provide the best care in all areas of the care process.

CMS standardizes the scores as the next step in the rating determination process. From there, they group the measures into five categories: mortality, safety of care, readmissions, patient experience, and timely and effective care. CMS then calculates the category score using a simple average. Then each category is weighted in the

overall rating score. Each category accounts for 22% of the hospital's total score, except for timely and effective care, which accounts for 12% of the hospital's total score.

The differences in hospital size and services provided are considered. For example, if a hospital does not provide obstetrics services, their score is reweighted based on the number of measures they were able to submit. CMS then puts hospitals into peer groups based on the number of measure groups they submitted. Within the peer groups, scores are split into five groups (one to five star ratings) using a bell curve.

Lakes Regional Healthcare has received a five star rating for four years in a row, and is the only hospital in northwest Iowa to receive the highest rating in that time.

"I am proud of what our team does each day for our patients, families, and communities. Their commitment to providing high quality, compassionate care to every patient at every encounter is demonstrated by how we earned the highest possible star rating,"

Lakes Regional Healthcare President and CEO Jason Harrington

"I am proud of what our team does each day for our patients, families, and communities. Their commitment to providing high quality, compassionate care to every patient at every encounter is demonstrated by how we earned the highest possible star rating," said Lakes Regional Healthcare President and CEO Jason Harrington. "It's an honor to be recognized for the efforts our care teams strive for every day and even more impressive that we have maintained that high standard for the last four years in a row."

National Distribution of Overall Star Rating

(based on July 2023 results)

Overall Rating Number of Hospitals (N=4,654, %)

★ 1 star	250 (5.4%)
★★ 2 stars	668 (14.4%)
★★★ 3 stars	872 (18.7%)
★★★★ 4 stars	803 (17.3%)
★★★★★ 5 stars	483 (10.4%)
NA	1,578 (34.0%)

Measures Used In 2023 CMS Star Ratings

SAFETY

- Central line-associated bloodstream infections
- Catheter-associated urinary tract infections
- Surgical site infections from colon surgery
- Surgical site infections from abdominal hysterectomy
- Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) blood laboratory-identified events (bloodstream infections)
- *C. diff* laboratory-identified events (intestinal infections)
- Rate of complications for hip/knee replacement patients
- Serious complications

READMISSION

- Hospital return days for heart attack patients
- Rate of readmission for coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery patients
- Rate of readmission for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients
- Hospital return days for heart failure patients
- Rate of readmission after hip/knee surgery
- Hospital return days for pneumonia patients
- Rate of readmission after discharge from hospital (hospital-wide)
- Rate of unplanned hospital visits after an outpatient colonoscopy

- Rate of unplanned hospital visits for patients receiving outpatient chemotherapy
- Rate of emergency department visits for patients receiving outpatient chemotherapy
- Ratio of unplanned hospital visits after hospital outpatient surgery

MORTALITY

- Death rate for heart attack patients
- Death rate for coronary artery bypass graft surgery patients
- Death rate for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients
- Death rate for heart failure patients
- Death rate for pneumonia patients
- Death rate for stroke patients
- Deaths among patients with serious treatable complications after surgery

PATIENT EXPERIENCES

- Patients who reported that their nurses communicated well
- Patients who reported that their doctors communicated well
- Patients who reported that they received help as soon as they wanted
- Patients who reported that staff explained about medicines before giving it to them
- Patients who reported that their room and bathroom were clean/patients who reported that the area around their room was quiet at night
- Patients who reported that they were given information about what to do during their recovery at home
- Patients who understood their care when they left the hospital
- Patients who gave their hospital a rating on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest)/patients who would recommend the hospital to their friends and family

TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE CARE

- Percentage of healthcare workers given influenza vaccination
- COVID-19 vaccination coverage among health care providers
- Percentage of patients who left the emergency department before being seen
- Percentage of patients who came to the emergency department with stroke symptoms who received brain scan results within 45 minutes of arrival

[cont'd page 9]



988 and 911: Emergency Numbers to Know

Most people know to **call 911 in an emergency**, whether it is for emergency medical services, fire, or police. There is, however, another number to be familiar with – 988. This number is the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number where support from trained counselors is available 24/7 nationwide for anyone in any kind of emotional distress or those experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis.

When you call 988, your call gets routed to a local Lifeline network crisis center based on your area code. If the local crisis center is unable to take the call, you'll be automatically routed to a national backup crisis center. From there, trained crisis counselors help you through the crisis, and if appropriate, connect you with community-based resources.

Over 98% of 988 contacts are resolved at that first point of contact, with no need for additional services to be dispatched. According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, several studies show that most callers feel significantly less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed and more hopeful after speaking to a 988 crisis counselor.

988 is not just a number to call – you can text 988 as well.

You can also chat online at 988lifeline.org/chat. Currently, text and chat functionality are only available in English. Phone service is available in English and Spanish, with translation services available in 250 additional languages. ■

Tax Dollars We Receive

Lakes Regional Healthcare (LRH) was founded in 1959 when Dickinson County residents organized and raised funds to build the hospital and designate it as a county hospital. As a county hospital, we receive funds from Dickinson County residents through property tax assessments. This year LRH received \$1.2 million based on a rate of \$0.37 per \$1,000 of each property owner's taxable property valuation. These dollars are used to fund necessary services with the vast majority used to support LRH's ambulance service. As you might know, the availability of mobile emergency services (ambulance) is a growing challenge in Iowa. Most of these services are volunteer and there is a declining number of volunteers in the state willing to take on the considerable amount of continuing education and call commitments to maintain the viability of these services. Even in

those fully-staffed services, similar to LRH, it is very difficult to recruit paramedics and EMTs and the cost of an ambulance now exceeds \$300,000 per ambulance (we have five of them).

There are 43 county-owned hospitals in Iowa. The average tax levy of those hospitals is \$1.96. LRH's levy rate is the second to the lowest of all 43 hospitals (Sunnycrest Manor County Hospital in Dubuque is the lowest at \$0.27). We understand we have a large tax based so the levy does not tell the whole story. LRH's \$1.2 million property tax draw is 42nd out of 43. We take great pride in being good stewards of the tax dollars we draw.

County hospitals can levy taxes up to a rate of \$0.81 for general, emergency and ambulance needs. Additional rates can be levied to

cover hospital expenditures for IPERS, debt, and payroll taxes. LRH has a history of keeping tax levies low and being fiscally responsible.

"Our hospital, along with most rural hospitals in Iowa, operates with negative margins. In other words, the funds received from patients' insurance plans and Medicare/Medicaid do not cover the cost of providing the necessary care. As a county hospital, we are fortunate to be able to ask the citizens to help cover a portion of the remaining costs through property tax dollars," said LRH Chief Financial Officer Steve Alger. "We work hard at keeping our costs down, but factors happen outside of our control that increase our operating costs such as inflation, workforce demands, and capital needs that may necessitate property tax increases." ■

[cont'd from page 7]

- Percentage of patients receiving appropriate recommendation for follow-up screening colonoscopy
- Percentage of mothers whose deliveries were scheduled too early (1-2 weeks early), when a scheduled delivery was not medically necessary
- Percentage of patients who received appropriate care for severe sepsis and septic shock
- Percentage of outpatients with chest pain or possible heart attack who got drugs to break up blood clots within 30 minutes of arrival
- Average (median) number of minutes before outpatients with chest pain or possible heart attack who needed specialized care were transferred to another hospital
- Average (median) time patients spent in the emergency department before leaving from the visit
- Percentage of outpatients with low-back pain who had an MRI without trying recommended treatments first, such as physical therapy
- Percentage of outpatient CT scans of the abdomen that were "combination" (double) scans
- Percentage of outpatients who got cardiac imaging stress tests before low-risk outpatient surgery ■



Plan Now to Attend the 12th Annual Grape Escape

Save the date for Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation's annual Grape Escape on February 9, 2024 at the Roof Garden Ballroom in Arnolds Park. The event will begin with social hour at 6:00 pm where you'll enjoy bourbon and wine and then delight in the signature tasting event catered by Hi-Lo Supper Club. To purchase your tickets or inquire about sponsorship, call **Sonja Hamm at 712-336-8791**. Stay up to date by following Lakes Regional Healthcare on Facebook!





Volunteers Provide Valuable Service

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Gift Shop Volunteer

Gift Shop volunteers are the frontline staff that greet and assist customers, ring up their purchases, and straighten up and restock shelves. Shifts are weekdays between 9:00 am and 12:00 pm and 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm.

West Entrance Volunteer

West Entrance volunteers greet patients and visitors as they enter the hospital and help escort and direct patients to various locations within the organization, including occasionally transporting patients via wheelchair. Shifts are weekdays from 8:00 am until 12:00 pm and 12:00 pm until 4:00 pm.

East Entrance Volunteer

Similar to the West Entrance volunteers, the East Entrance volunteers greet patients and visitors as they enter the hospital's east side. Shifts are weekdays from 8:00 am until 12:00 pm and 12:00 pm until 4:00 pm.

Hospice Volunteers

Hospice volunteers provide companionship, read, write letters, run errands, prepare meals, do housework or yard work, provide respite care for hospice patients and relief for their caregivers, and do clerical duties for the hospice program.

There are also volunteers that donate their time and talents from home by sewing teddy bears for pediatric patients in our ER and knitting baby caps for newborns in our Birth Center. ■

Volunteering has been part of our history since before the first patient received care and is still an integral part of the organization. For over 60 years, Lakes Regional Healthcare volunteers have assisted patients and staff in various ways, such as escorting and transporting patients throughout the facility, providing companionship to patients, delivering patient meal trays to cancer patients as they receive chemotherapy, and assisting Gift Shop customers.

We currently have approximately 40 volunteers that give of their time and talents based on their availability and desires. Depending on the area, volunteer shifts are three or four hours long. Some volunteers work every week and others work once a month. Some take the winter off, and some take the summer off.

If you're interested in volunteering, apply online at www.lakeshealth.org/volunteer or call 712-336-8799.

Easy Ways to Give

We want to make giving as easy as possible for you. Here are some easy ways to give that will continue to help improve healthcare in the Iowa Great Lakes.

Online – Give to us directly by going to <https://www.averafoundation.org/donate-with-search> or hovering over the QR code shown here. Once at the site, select **"Other"** for the Avera facility, type **"Lakes Regional Healthcare"** in the "Other Avera Facility" box and make a donation in a matter of a couple minutes!



In Person – Call Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation Executive Director Sonja Hamm at 712-336-8791 or email her at Sonja.hamm@lakeshealth.org to set up a time to meet with her personally.

Mail – Cut out and complete the card below and mail it in with your gift.



Yes, I Want to Make a Difference!

We are deeply grateful for the support of our friends in the community. Thank you for your gift to Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation.

I would like to give a gift of: ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 Other: \$ _____

My gift is:

In memory of _____ In honor of _____

Please send acknowledgement to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Name _____

Contact Person _____

Title if Business/Organization Gift

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

Card number _____

Expiration date _____ / _____ (month/year)

CVV number _____

Signature _____

Please make checks payable to Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation. Your gift is tax deductible as provided by law.

☐ If you prefer to remain anonymous, check this box

Please check, as appropriate:

- ☐ Address change
- ☐ Name change
- ☐ I/we have included LRH Foundation in our will
- ☐ I would like a personal phone call or visit
- ☐ Send volunteer information

Please return to:

Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation
Attention: Sonja Hamm
PO Box AB
Spirit Lake, IA 51360

For more information on how your gifts make a difference or to make your gift online, please visit

<https://www.averafoundation.org/donate-with-search>.

 **Lakes Regional
Healthcare Foundation**
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Behavioral Health Coalition

Addressing Mental Health Needs in Dickinson County

Every three years Lakes Regional Healthcare conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and then develops a Health Improvement Plan based on the feedback provided from Iowa Great Lakes area residents. The 2022 CHNA identified awareness and access to behavioral health resources as one of our community's greatest needs.

Since that time, a Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition was formed to address these needs. The coalition includes representatives from area schools, mental health organizations, businesses, non-profit organizations, Lakes Regional Healthcare, and Dickinson County Public Health. According to Lakes Regional Healthcare Director of Population and Public Health Katy Carey, the coalition meets every other month and membership has grown with each meeting.

"Elderbridge, the local schools, the juvenile court system, Seasons Center, the VA, Wel-Life, Plains Area Mental Health, Dickinson County Community Services are some of our coalition members. Plus, Rotary has become a major partner and helped a lot with our initiatives," she said. "The members are diverse in age and perspectives and represent different parts of our community."

Last fall they had much success with their first awareness campaign, which was a Harvest Outreach initiative. Farmers and agricultural workers are at greater risk of depression, due to farm-related stressors. The Harvest Outreach Initiative recognized their hard work while acknowledging the struggles that may accompany their lifestyle. Over 700 bags containing a snack, bottle of water, and a mental health resource card with different support options available were provided to

farmers and ag workers at all five grain elevators across Dickinson County and two farm implement shops in Lake Park. It was so successful that they did it again this fall.

In August the coalition organized the first Rotary Move for Mental Health Walk. Nearly 70 people participated in the walk. Proceeds from registrations and donations and Rotary's Brew Fest event are dedicated toward bringing a mental health speaker series to students in Dickinson County. Carey said, "At this point we're identifying who will speak and what dates will work for everyone involved. It will likely happen in the spring or maybe even early next fall. But we're happy it's in the works and appreciate how we've been able to work closely with the schools to increase awareness about mental health concerns."

The coalition provided information about area mental health and wellness resources to students and parents at school registrations and intake conferences early this fall. Several handouts and in-person support were available at the events. Two pieces of information provided were newly created postcards that



Foundation Gifts That Make a Difference

Scholarship Endowment Fund

Make it possible for a local high school or college student achieve their dream of having a career in healthcare. Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation's Scholarship Endowment Fund provides scholarships each year in hopes of having those students return to the Iowa Great Lakes to provide care to those who helped them.

Hospice Fund

This fund is utilized to support a service that cares for people who have a terminal illness. Hospice works with patients and their families to maintain quality of life and support the patient's loved ones during a difficult time.

Engraved Pavers

Engraved brick pavers and seat walls at Lakes Regional Healthcare's outdoor garden patio are available for purchase as a gift to Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation. Your gift would memorialize your loved one, and positively impact others who receive care at Lakes Regional Healthcare. To learn more, contact Sonja Hamm at 712-336-8791 or sonja.hamm@lakeshealth.org.

Caring for Life Fund

This fund is utilized to support just-in-time support for our patients and their families. It is our "area of greatest need" fund and supports programs, services, and equipment in all areas of Lakes Regional Healthcare.

Your gift to the Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation supports lifesaving services that hospital revenue alone cannot provide. Choose a project that is close to your heart and know you are making a difference in the lives of others. ■

conveniently and discreetly fit in a pocket or purse. One postcard includes contact information and hours of operation for housing and homelessness, affordable transportation, emergency food assistance, and food pantries. The other postcard includes contact information for mental health, substance abuse, and veteran resources. Both postcards are available at schools, physician offices, public health, and more.

Children and young adults are far from the only demographic affected by mental health. Carey said it affects every demographic, regardless of age, income, or race. In fact, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in five adults and roughly 17% of youth aged 6-17 experience mental illness each year. "We're taking steps to increase awareness and access to resources for everyone," said Carey.

The coalition created a website that provides several local mental health resources and tips to help friends and family members struggling with depression. That website, www.LetsTalkDickinson.org, is continually being improved to help people in the Iowa Great Lakes. There are tabs that have resources specifically for the farming community, youth, and the coalition is currently working on developing a tab specifically for senior citizens.



The next CHNA will be completed in 2025, and Carey believes mental health will continue to be a top priority. "Even though it is often difficult to quantify how much the coalition's work has helped, I appreciate the relationships and momentum the coalition has built," she said. "The discussion about mental health is happening now. It's not taboo anymore. People are realizing how common mental health concerns are, what's available for help, and those are important first steps." ■

Tips for a Safe, Healthy, and Happy Winter

The Iowa Great Lakes is known for its amazing summer season, and winter is often the season many people can't wait to pass by as quickly as possible. The hard truth is that the colder seasons last a bit longer here, and it's important to take steps to be safe, healthy, and happy while you endure them!

TIPS TO BE HEALTHY

1 Limit the spread of germs

Bacteria and viruses get you sick, so limiting their spread will do a lot to keep you healthier. The most important thing is to wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Wash all parts of your hand – including in between and the tips of your fingers and the outside of your hand – for at least 20 seconds. Using a hand sanitizer is just as beneficial, too, if your hands aren't visibly soiled. Just be sure to moisturize them because hand sanitizer is drying, and your hands will likely be drier than normal during the fall and winter to begin with.

Other ways to limit the spread of germs include staying home when you are sick. Also, don't share cups and utensils with others. People are often contagious before they show symptoms of illness, so it's better to be safe than sorry.

2 Stay hydrated

Your body is made up mostly of water, and maintaining hydration is important for immunity, your mood, and life itself. Inadequate water intake, especially during the winter months, can cause dehydration which may lead to chapped lips, nosebleeds, dry cough, constipation, headaches, fatigue, and muscle cramps. Aim to drink eight to 12 8-oz glasses of water each day. Hydration is also important in the air, so consider getting a humidifier. It will help your skin, too, along with using lotion.

3 Increase your Vitamin D

Vitamin D has a lot of benefits. It strengthens your bones, reduces your chances of getting cancer, builds your immune system, controls infections, and reduces inflammation. You can get Vitamin D through food, supplements, and sunlight. Foods higher in Vitamin D include fish, mushrooms, eggs, and Vitamin D-fortified milk and orange juice.

4 Maintain a consistent sleep schedule

It is tempting to go to bed earlier and wake up later during the winter because the sun isn't out as long. But resist that temptation and stick to your sleep schedule to help your immune system. Try to get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

5 Get a flu shot

Influenza is a serious illness, leading to hospitalization and even death for some. It can be especially serious among young children, older adults, and people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes. A flu shot decreases your chances of getting the flu. You can get the flu shot at Dickinson County Public Health (call 712-339-6050) and at most pharmacies.

6 Eat nutritious food

Good nutrition helps you in so many ways. Focus on eating fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, and lean proteins each day. Limit

sugar and saturated fats. If you need help with a food plan, Lakes Regional Healthcare Registered Dietitian Beth Samuelson can help. Give her a call at 712-336-8785 or talk to your healthcare provider.

7 Stay active

Physical activity is a big immune booster, so don't wait until New Year's to start an exercise regimen. Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity in each day, whether it's a brisk walk, lifting weights or taking a class at the local gym, or climbing stairs.

TIPS TO BE SAFE

1 Dress appropriately when outdoors or in your car

Nobody wants to be cold or get frostbite this winter, so take this advice. First, wear several layers of light, warm clothing. Throw on a tightly woven, insulated, wind- and water-resistant coat. Pull on some waterproof and insulated boots (with rubber soles and good traction and consider using ice cleats) and top with lined mittens, a hat, and a scarf.

2 Prepare your home for the winter

Your home reacts to the colder season, too. Help it get through the winter in top form by installing weather stripping, insulation, and storm windows. Clean out your gutters. Inspect and clean your fireplace and chimney. Install and test the batteries in smoke detectors inside each bedroom and on every level of your home.

3 Prepare your vehicle, too

Your car may not get up and go as quickly when it's cold outside, and it also must deal with road and weather conditions not experienced during the warmer months. For these reasons, service the radiator and maintain the antifreeze level. Check your tire treads and consider replacing with all-weather or snow tires. Keep your gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines and in case you get stuck somewhere and need to wait for help to arrive.



4 Prepare a winter emergency kit to keep in your car

You never know if you just might be stuck somewhere in your car during the winter. Hopefully it will never happen, but having these items in your car can help you until help arrives:

- Portable cell phone charger and extra batteries
- Extra hats, coats, mittens, blankets, and sleeping bags
- Food and water
- Booster cable, flares, tire pump, bag of sand or cat litter
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery powered radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Plastic bags (for sanitation)

TIPS TO BE HAPPY

1 Stay connected

It's easy to stay inside alone, binge watch, and eat unhealthy foods all winter long. But resist the urge and talk to or get together with friends and family regularly. Also consider volunteering; there are several opportunities in the area. Contact the Voluntary Action Center at 712-336-4444 for ideas.

2 Take advantage of what our community offers

The Iowa Great Lakes is an amazing place to live year-round. This winter go ice skating, cross country skiing, or ice fishing. Or go snowmobiling (even join the Snowhawks Club at www.dickinsoncountysnowhawks.com). Help organize and/or participate in the University of Okoboji's Winter Games. Or release your inner child and have an old-fashioned snowball fight, make snow angels, or build a snow fort.

3 Don't be SAD

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that typically occurs in the fall or winter. It's due to a lack of sunlight, which decreases your serotonin levels, which in turn affects your sleep patterns and mood. To get it through sunlight, try to spend at least 10-30 minutes outdoors each day, or at least sitting by a window. You can also consider light therapy but talk to your healthcare provider first. ■

Help Build a Culture Free of Diabetes

Most of us either struggle with or know someone dealing with cancer or heart disease. But did you know diabetes is common too? In fact, statistically there are roughly 1,800 people in Dickinson County that have diabetes. Of those, nearly 95% of them have type 2 diabetes. And of the remaining 16,000 Dickinson County residents that haven't been diagnosed with diabetes, over 5,000 of them have prediabetes and most of them don't even know it.

We would love to change the incidence of diabetes and prediabetes in Dickinson County and believe education is a key component to making this change. Lakes Regional Healthcare (LRH) Foundation is helping us achieve our goal by raising funds for various educational projects in the community. One example is a 4-week diabetes prevention program for students within our community schools. The program is called Mileage Club and will help our county's youth develop healthy habits to prevent type 2 diabetes. Gifts made to LRH Foundation will provide grants and educational tools to support the schools in

this effort. Another example will be free or low-cost cooking classes, complete with take-home meals for Dickinson County residents. Ideas are also being discussed about programs to educate and help families move toward healthier eating and activity options.

Your contribution to Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation's Decrease Diabetes Fund will go a long way in ensuring residents and visitors in this area receive the education they need for better health. Whether you give \$10, \$100, \$1,000 or \$10,000, your gift is greatly appreciated.

We've tried to make it convenient for you to help us. Just complete and mail in the form on page 11. Or you can make a gift online at www.averafoundation.org/donate-with-search and type "Lakes Regional Healthcare" and "Decrease Diabetes Fund" in the notes. Or call Sonja Hamm at 712-336-8791.

**Thank you for your help in improving the health of people
in the Iowa Great Lakes! ■**



Easy Holiday Recipes Keep the Delicious, Lose the Unhealthy



QUINOA STUFFING

This high fiber, high protein, healthy-for-you dish is a great substitute for the low fiber and high sodium boxed stuffing mix.

Serves 12

Ingredients:

- 2 cups red quinoa
- 5 cups vegetable or chicken broth, gluten free
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp dried sage
- 2 Tbsp fresh thyme
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 ½ cups butternut squash, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- ¾ cup toasted and chopped pecans (substitute ¾ cup drained chickpeas for nut allergies)
- 3 Tbsp dried cranberries

Directions:

1. Bring quinoa, stock, salt, sage, thyme and pepper to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to simmer. Cook 30 minutes until quinoa is tender and stock is all absorbed.
2. While quinoa is cooking, heat 1 Tbsp oil over medium heat and add garlic, onion, and celery. Cook until onion softens, about 3 minutes. Transfer to bowl. Heat 1 Tbsp oil over medium heat again in a large skillet. Saute squash, stirring often, until tender and lightly browned, 15-20 minutes.
3. Combine the squash, onion mixture, quinoa, pecans, and cranberries together. Stir. Adjust salt and pepper to taste.
4. Add mixture to sprayed baking dish and cover with foil. Bake in 325° oven for 20-30 minutes until top is slightly crispy and mixture is warmed through.

ROASTED SWEET POTATOES

This delicious, nutrition-packed, low sugar, and low fat way of cooking sweet potatoes is a great replacement for the high-carb, high-sugar, and high-fat recipe of candied yams with marshmallows. It is vegan and allergen friendly without gluten, dairy, eggs, soy, and nuts.

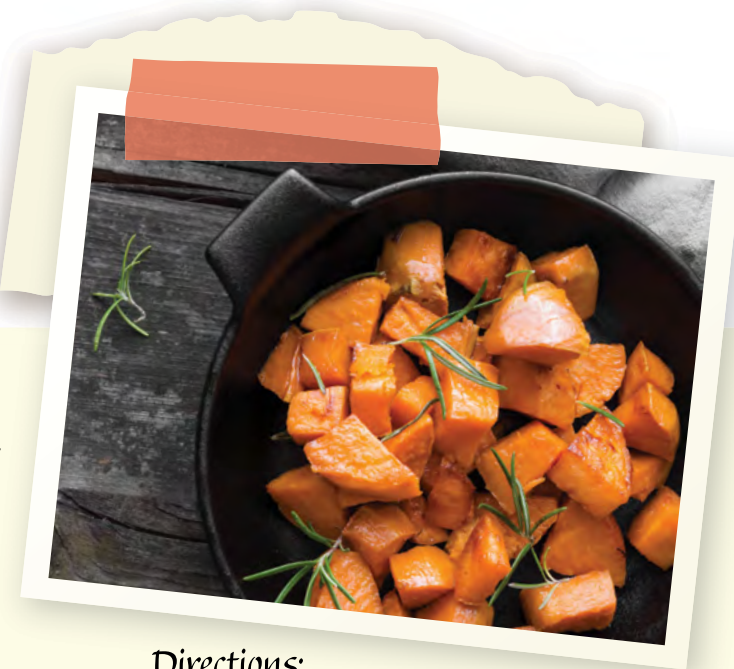
Serves 12

Ingredients:

- 8 large sweet potatoes, peeled or unpeeled, cut into 1" cubes
- ½ cup avocado oil or sunflower oil
- ¼ cup real maple syrup
- 1 tsp salt, optional
- ½ tsp pepper
- ½ tsp paprika

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. In a medium size bowl or in a sealed plastic bag, toss together sweet potatoes, oil, and maple syrup.
3. Spray a large baking sheet with cooking spray and arrange sweet potatoes on it so they are not overlapping.
4. In a small bowl, combine salt, pepper and paprika. Sprinkle seasonings over the sweet potatoes.
5. Bake for 20 minutes, remove and stir. Bake an additional 20-25 minutes until lightly brown.
6. Add additional salt and pepper to taste if needed. Serve immediately.



Type 2 Diabetes and Prediabetes: It Can Be Prevented or Reversed

The incidence of diabetes has steadily increased over the last two decades, and is now something many of us must manage, and many more of us are on our way to developing. An increasing number of children, teens and young adults are also developing diabetes, which was almost unheard of a generation ago.



One in 10 Americans has diabetes, and of them, 90-95% of them have type 2 diabetes.



Of the remaining American adults that haven't been diagnosed with diabetes, over one in three of them have prediabetes and 80% of them don't even know it.

The good news is type 2 diabetes can be prevented or reversed. Before we get into how, let's educate ourselves on the causes, symptoms, and risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes is caused when cells don't respond normally to insulin, known as insulin resistance. As a result, the

pancreas makes more insulin to try to get the cells to respond appropriately. This process increases blood sugar, which can damage your body and cause serious health problems such as heart disease, stroke, vision loss, and kidney disease. Prediabetes is where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes.

According to Lakes Regional Family Medicine physician Christine Fricke, DO, those with diabetes often don't have any or have very few symptoms for several years, but these are some that may occur:

- Urinate a lot, often at night
- Very thirsty
- Very hungry
- Very tired
- Very dry skin
- Blurry vision
- Numb or tingling hands or feet
- Sores that heal slowly



There are a few risk factors for type 2 diabetes and prediabetes, which include:

- Overweight, especially excess belly fat
- Age 45 or older
- Have a parent or sibling with Type 2 diabetes
- Physical activity less than three times each week
- Ever having gestational diabetes or gave birth to a baby that weighed over 9 pounds
- Being prediabetic

HOW TO PREVENT OR REVERSE TYPE 2 DIABETES

Prevention of diabetes is the advice often heard to live a healthy life. First, maintain a healthy weight. Prediabetics and those with diabetes who are not at a healthy weight should lose 5-7% of their body weight. Lakes Regional Healthcare Registered Dietitian Beth Samuelson said, "Focusing just on what the scale says often leads to disordered eating with over restriction and then bingeing. Instead, focus on foods that keep you full longer like protein, fiber, and healthy fats. Those types of foods help to balance blood sugar and in turn help facilitate weight change. The key to success is coming up with a balanced meal plan that fits your taste preferences and lifestyle."

The second step to preventing or reversing type 2 diabetes is to be physically active. Getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity five times each week is important. Samuelson said, "The best exercise is one that you are willing to do. Something as simple as a short walk right after supper helps to transfer the glucose into your muscle cells where it can be used as energy, instead of that glucose being converted into temporary fat storage called triglycerides."

When children and teens get diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, it can set them up for lifelong health problems.

Here are tips to prevent or lower your child's risk of getting type 2 diabetes:

- Drink more water and fewer sugary drinks
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Get kids involved in making healthier meals
- Eat at the dinner table only, not in front of a screen
- Have meals together as a family as often as possible
- Don't insist kids clean their plates
- Reward kids with praise instead of food
- Take parent and child fitness classes together
- Make physical activity more fun; try new things

- Encourage kids to join a sports team
- Have a "fit kit" available – a jump rope, hand weights, resistance bands
- Limit screen time to 2 hours per day
- Plan active outings like hiking or biking
- Take walks together
- Have them do active chores – vacuum, rake leaves, garden

Blood sugar values are expressed in milligrams of sugar per deciliter (mg/dL) or millimoles of sugar per liter (mmol/L) of blood.

In general:

Normal – less than 100 mg/dL

Prediabetes – 100-125 mg/dL

Diabetes – 126+ mg/dL

**Blood
Sugar
Levels**



Hover over this QR code to get the CDC's "On Your Way to Preventing Type 2 Diabetes" guide.

These lifestyle changes can take time and can seem overwhelming at first. Regardless of where you are in the process or what your current health status is, we are here to help. Diabetes resources are available at Lakes Regional Healthcare:

- **Testing** – A simple blood test (after fasting) can be done via a provider at Lakes Regional Family Medicine. Call 712-336-3750 for an appointment.
- **Nutrition Counseling** – Registered Dietitian Beth Samuelson can meet with you to develop an eating plan to balance your blood sugars, nourish your body, and improve your overall health. Call 712-336-8650 or talk to your healthcare provider to schedule an appointment with her.
- **Diabetic Education** – Registered Nurses Jennifer Amesquita and Kia Gonnerman are Diabetic Educators who can teach you how to best manage all aspects of your diabetes care, including blood sugar monitoring, eye and foot health, healthy coping, medication management, and more. Talk to your healthcare provider to schedule an appointment with them. ■



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What Our Patients Say

"I had not one bad experience with this whole visit. Every person I dealt with or provided care for me was great. I can't even pick one person that provided better care than the next one because each person was great and made me feel like I was the only patient they were treating."

"Another hospital is much closer for me, however, I will drive the extra miles to see my doctor and have any procedures at LRH. The service your team there provides is always above and beyond."

"I had THE BEST experience at LRH! The doctors, nurses, CNAs, CRNAs, housekeepers, kitchen, WOW!! All caring and loving care! I cannot say enough about the excellent care and attention I received from all the staff! I will highly recommend Lakes Regional! Thank you thank you!"

"Just can't say enough about the amazing quality of care received."

"From admission to ER – MRI, lab, nurses, CNAs, doctors, kitchen, housekeeping, discharge planner – most excellent care."