

RIVER FALLS AREA HOSPITAL

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Linda Robertson, RN, (center) and Mary Steele work with volunteers like Bob Johnson, MD, to provide medical care to low-income patients at the Free Clinic.



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May Week of Wellness

Free Clinic ready to serve patients



AFTER A YEAR of planning and development, the Free Clinic of Pierce & St. Croix Counties is ready to serve patients. Uninsured, low-income people without a source for health care can now get the care they need.

“We’ve moved from planning and creating to operating a working clinic with the structure and leadership needed for long-term success,” says Mary Conroy Johnson, RN, Free Clinic board chair. Linda Robertson, RN, has been hired as clinic manager, and will be overseeing the activities of more than 100 volunteers, including dozens of doctors, nurses and physicians’ assistants. The steering committee that worked to create the clinic has been replaced by a permanent board that will guide its operations.

FREE, HIGH-QUALITY CARE

The Free Clinic is open Tuesday evenings. It uses space within the River Falls Medical Clinic. “The Free Clinic will serve uninsured residents of Pierce and St. Croix counties living at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level,” Robertson says. “We know that other people have needs too, but our resources are limited and we can make a substantial impact on that targeted population.”

The Free Clinic will provide basic care for anything that might require a medical clinic visit, including one-time visits for colds and flu or management of chronic conditions such as diabetes. In addition to health care services, the clinic also helps patients get access to needed medications.

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RFAH UPDATE



Bring your laptop

Wireless Internet access is now available to patients and visitors at River Falls Area Hospital. "This will help people stay in touch with family and friends," says Bill Frommelt, manager of Ancillary Services. ❖

A partnership for babies' health

Eating and growing are a big part of babies' lives, and it seems to just happen for most children.

For some babies, eating isn't so easy. Feeding and swallowing problems are fairly common in premature babies and those with special needs like Down syndrome. But feeding and swallowing problems can also happen in typically developing infants, toddlers and children.

Feeding and swallowing problems can cause food and liquid to get into the lungs, resulting in respiratory infections or pneumonia. Babies and children with swallowing problems may have frequent respiratory infections, choke or cough while eating or drinking, have difficulty gaining weight, or refuse to eat or drink.

Thanks to collaboration between the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (UWRF) Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic and River Falls Area Hospital, babies and children can now be tested for swallowing disorders with a "swallow study." "The test is a 'moving X-ray,' and allows us to see if a swallowing problem exists," says Sharyl Samargia, speech-language pathologist and faculty member in the Department of Communicative Disorders at UWRF. "We can then create or modify feeding plans to make sure babies and children are eating safely, getting good nutrition, and hopefully avoid respiratory illnesses associated with swallowing disorders."

If your child has symptoms of feeding or swallowing difficulties, talk to your doctor about a swallow study at River Falls Area Hospital. ❖



Hospital and clinic expansions move forward

Update by Randy Farrow, RFAH president

In partnership with the River Falls Medical Clinic, I am pleased to report that we are making excellent progress in our efforts to bring additional health care services to the community. The completion of the clinic addition in late 2006 was the first step in our plan to offer new specialty services and to expand coverage in existing service areas.

Starting in 2007 we have commitments for expanded doctor availability in urology, cardiology and ophthalmology, and we are making good progress in securing coverage in areas such as oncology and neurology where we don't currently offer services.

With the additional clinic space, we have also been able to move all of the doctors, including those who were previously located in the hospital, into one area. We believe that having all the doctors in one clinic location will reduce confusion for patients and create a more consistent process for getting medical care. The specialists and primary care doctors will now be working side by side, which will also allow for greater communication and coordination of care.

Phase 2 under way. Although we have met with some unforeseen delays, we are now under way with the second phase of our construction, which involves the expansion of our surgery program. As the community has grown and we have added more surgeons, we are in need of additional space to perform surgical procedures. This project will add two more operating rooms and two endoscopy suites (for diagnostic screenings such as colonoscopies and upper gastrointestinal scopes). This should position us to meet the increased demand for surgical services, expand our capabilities in new areas and provide a more comfortable environment for patients.

Watch for more information about an open house on Saturday, Sept. 15, from 1 to 4 p.m., to tour the facility and see some of the exciting changes going on at your local hospital and clinic. ❖



Under construction: Dennis Wussler (left) and Tom Dusek, River Falls Area Hospital engineering and maintenance employees, check details on the new endoscopy unit that is scheduled for completion this summer.

KIDS AND ALLERGIES

Aaa-choo! Seasons of sneezing

IT'S THAT TIME of year—the doors burst open and the kids fly outside, the trees and flowers burst open and the pollen flies, too. For many kids, this combination makes spring and summer the seasons of sneezing.

According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, about 20 percent of American kids have allergies. Approximately 40 to 45 million adults have allergies, which usually appeared when they were children. While many are seasonal, some linger year-round. These are the top allergies in children:

- Pollen from trees, prevalent in spring.
- Pollen from grasses and weeds, prevalent in summer and fall.
- Mold.
- Dust mites.
- Cockroaches.
- Pet dander.
- Foods, including peanuts, eggs, milk, wheat and soy.

WHAT IS AN ALLERGY?

An allergic reaction occurs when the body's immune system overreacts to a normally harmless substance and treats it as if it is a danger to the body. The body's defense systems produce substances that create allergic symptoms. "In children, it results in a runny nose, sniffing, dark circles under

the eyes, and a line over the bridge of the nose caused by wiping the nose upward," says Heather Tvedt Davis, MD, pediatrician, River Falls Medical Clinic. "They can get itchy, watery eyes, and it affects their sense of taste and smell."

Allergies can disrupt children's activities, too. Allergies are responsible for more than 2 million days of missed school each year, according to the American College of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

It's hard to limit kids' exposure to allergens without limiting their activities, especially in the summer. Here are a few suggestions from Davis:

- Wash sheets every week.
- Avoid feather pillows and comforters.
- Remove stuffed animals from the child's room.
- Don't put carpet in the child's room.
- Have the child take a shower at bedtime to remove pollen and allergens from his or her body.
- Limit pollen exposure as much as possible by closing windows, especially while mowing the lawn.

Davis notes that it's good for a child to have some exposure to allergens. "Don't be fanatically clean," she says. These small exposures help develop a stronger immune system.

If symptoms are not severe, Davis suggests trying over-the-counter allergy medications. Several are available in children's doses.

If symptoms are more severe or persistent, and over-the-counter remedies aren't effective, see your

If you are concerned about your child's allergy symptoms, talk with your child's doctor.



Caring for kids: Heather Tvedt Davis, MD, has a special interest in controlling asthma in children.

child's doctor. Prescription medications may help your child feel better. Allergy shots may be effective for some children.

"Allergies can go hand-in-hand with asthma and can trigger an asthma attack," adds Davis, who has a special interest in treating children with asthma. "Getting allergies under control can prevent a trip to the ER with an asthma attack."

To make an appointment with Davis, call 715-425-6701.

For more information about allergies and children, visit www.riverfallsareahospital.com. ❖





Living well with arthritis

TREATMENT HELPS RESTORE QUALITY OF LIFE

WITH RHEUMATOID arthritis in her knees, hands and feet, Berneita Wienke could just say, “it hurts too much,” and retire to the easy chair. You’re more likely to see her at the Sports Medicine Rehabilitation & Wellness Center at River Falls Area Hospital (RFAH), where she exercises several times a week to help keep her arthritis at bay and to stay fit.

She’s also busy doing her own housework, cooking and washing. She gave up the gardening she used to love, but still enjoys camping and many other activities that she might not be able to do if she wasn’t using all the resources available to help her live well with arthritis.

WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

There are two kinds of arthritis, and their treatment differs.

Osteoarthritis causes joint surfaces to break down, wear out and cause pain. It may be caused by a combination of injuries, overuse of joints, excess weight or the effects

of rheumatoid arthritis. Joint pain, stiffness, reduced range of motion, and a cracking sound in the joints are all signs of osteoarthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis is the result of the body’s immune system attacking the tissue in the joints. In addition to the joint pain and stiffness, there may be redness and warmth at the joints, tingling or numbness, and growths on the joints. Eventually the joint may become deformed. Tiredness, achiness, loss of appetite and feeling weak are also symptoms that accompany rheumatoid arthritis.

While treatment for osteoarthritis is usually geared toward reduction of pain, the antirheumatic medications that are often prescribed for rheumatoid arthritis act on the disease and may keep it from getting worse.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

There is help for people with arthritis. While there is no cure or way to reverse the disease, there are treatments that restore quality of

life and allow people to do things they enjoy. The following are common treatments for arthritis.

Acetaminophen or nonsteroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to reduce pain and inflammation are a first line of treatment for arthritis pain in any joint.

Physical therapy and occupational therapy can also help minimize pain. “We show people different ways of doing their daily activities, help them strengthen the muscles around the joint, and teach them how to be more protective of their sore joints,” says Brian Weber, DPT, physical therapist, Sports Medicine Rehabilitation & Wellness Center at RFAH. “Activity also helps patients control weight, which helps reduce pain.”

Physical therapy may include manual therapy, heat and cold, electrical stimulation, or ultrasound. Braces and orthotics are sometimes used to reduce stress on joints, and exercises are customized for each patient’s needs. “A little motion is good, and too much



We're in this together: Walter and Berneita Wienke exercise every week at RFAH. The exercise helps them both stay fit, and it helps her cope with arthritis in her joints by strengthening surrounding muscles.

Specialized care: Berneita Wienke works with Brian Weber, DPT, at the Sports Medicine Rehabilitation & Wellness Center at RFAH. Specialized exercises helped her regain and maintain strength and range of motion after knee surgery.

Doing the things you love: Berneita Wienke has had to give up some things she enjoys, such as gardening, because of her arthritis, but she still crochets baby blankets and other items. The crocheting helps keep her fingers nimble despite the arthritis.

creates pain,” Weber says. “Physical therapists help patients do the right amount of exercise, the right way.”

Wienke credits the physical therapists at RFAH for helping her exercise with confidence, and says exercise is the key to feeling better.

Injections of cortisone or joint-lubricating medications may be used effectively to relieve symptoms in many joints.

Attend our arthritis seminar! See page 7 for details.

SURGERY FOR KNEES AND HIPS

Surgery is a treatment option if the more conservative methods are no longer effective.

Replacement of knee and hip joints are common surgeries at RFAH, performed by William T. Schneider, MD, and Andrea Saterbak, MD, orthopedic surgeons, St. Croix Orthopaedics.

“Joint replacement gives back more quality of life than almost any other surgery,” Schneider says. “While results vary, more than 90 percent of patients have a good outcome, and new techniques and tools have improved

joint replacement surgery.”

“Improvements in knee and hip replacement include instruments that help us to use smaller incisions that may help to ease the recovery process,” Saterbak says. “Pain control after the surgery has also improved, and the nursing care and physical therapy given after surgery help patients recover more quickly. Expected stay in a hospital setting now is on average two to

three days.”

Wienke has had two knee surgeries at RFAH and appreciates having excellent care, follow-up and physical therapy close to home.

TREATMENTS FOR BACK, HANDS AND FEET

Orthopedic specialists are also available at RFAH to help patients with arthritis in the spine, hands and feet. Dan Hanson, MD, specializes in spine care; Ryan Kalstad, MD, specializes in hands; and Melanie Berg, DPM, cares for arthritis in the feet.

“Almost everyone eventually

has some arthritis in their spine, but it doesn’t always cause pain,” Hanson says. “If it causes pressure on nerves, pain can radiate down legs or arms and body functions can be affected. It’s important to treat it.”

“Approximately 80 percent of women develop arthritis in the hands, particularly at the base of the thumb,” notes Kalstad. “People often mistakenly think their arthritis pain is caused by carpal tunnel syndrome.”

Berg sees many patients with arthritis in their big toes and in the middle “arch” part of their feet. “It’s very common and we can almost always help relieve arthritis pain,” she says.



For more information about joint replacement surgery, attend our arthritis seminar (see page 7 to learn more), or call 715-426-4537 to attend one of the monthly Joint Ventures programs. For more information about arthritis, visit www.riverfallsareahospital.com and click on *Conditions & Treatments*, then *Arthritis*. ❖



RIVER FALLS AREA HOSPITAL

COMING EVENTS

Raising Kids Who Can: Skills Training for Parents of Younger Children

Roger A. Ballou, PhD, licensed marriage and family therapist
Mondays, May 7, 14, 21
7-8:30 p.m.

RFAH Classroom B/C
\$30 per single parent,
\$45 per couple

The River Falls Area Hospital's Wellness & Fitness Center is sponsoring a three-week class to teach new skills to help you successfully parent your child. Learn a highly effective parenting model by which you can guide your young child to become respectful, responsible and self-directed. This program is based on the highly successful Adlerian approach to parenting.

■ May 7: "Understanding Your Parenting Style"

This session focuses on exploring various parenting styles to understand which get positive results.

■ May 14: "Encouraging Good Behavior and Correcting Misbehavior—Part 1"

This session provides you with an understanding of your child's goals and needs that may lead him or her to misbehave.

■ May 21: "Encouraging Good Behavior and Correcting Misbehavior—Part 2"

Learn how your child responds better to natural and logical consequences rather than punishment to change behavior.

EXERCISE

Tai Chi

Tuesdays, May 29-July 31
6:30-8:30 p.m.
RFAH Classroom B/C
\$72 per 10-week session for members, \$85 for nonmembers

Fit Kids

Call for class schedules
5:30-6:30 p.m.
RFAH Classroom B/C
FREE

CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION

Childbirth

Call for class schedules
RFAH Classroom B/C
\$65 per couple

Prepare for the birth of your baby. These classes are offered both during the week and on the weekend. Classes are limited to 10 couples.

Sibling Class: Big Brother/Big Sister

Call for class schedules
6:30-8 p.m.
RFAH Classroom A
\$10 per family

When families are sharing the birth of a new child with other children at home, the brothers and sisters of the new baby also face a new relationship. We'll talk about what babies are like, practice diapering a doll and take a tour of The Birth Center, where mom will be staying when she has the baby. Recommended for children ages 2 years and older.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

American Cancer Society: Look Good, Feel Better

First Monday of the month on alternating months: June 4, Aug. 6
7 p.m.

Classroom A

A free, national public service program to help women undergoing cancer treatment learn to cope with the appearance-related side effects of treatment and regain a sense of self-confidence and control of their lives. Contact Rebecca Hayden in the Wellness & Fitness Center at 715-426-4545.

Smoking Cessation Clinic

Call the Wellness & Fitness Center to schedule a class
\$45

This program designed by the American Lung Association helps you quit smoking and maintain your new nonsmoking lifestyle.

Drivers Refresher Course

Call for dates
8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
RFAH Classroom B/C
\$10 (checks payable to AARP)

AARP is offering an eight-hour classroom refresher for drivers 50 and older. Learn how to avoid driving hazards. Auto insurance discounts are offered in most states—contact your insurance agent.

CPR, AED AND FIRST AID CLASSES

The River Falls Area Hospital and the River Falls Area Ambulance Service

River Falls Area Hospital invites you to attend a health-promoting class or seminar. For more information, visit www.riverfallsareahospital.com or call 715-426-4545.

(RFAAS) are teaming up to offer more training opportunities right here in River Falls—so when our neighbors need help, they will get it faster. With a wide range of choices, you can learn for the first time or take a refresher class. To register, call the hospital's Wellness & Fitness Center at 715-426-4545.

Heartsaver AED Initial (AED and CPR training)

Thursday, May 10

6-10 p.m., RFAH

\$35 (does not include book)

Heartsaver AED Refresher

Thursday, May 17

6-9 p.m., RFAH

\$20 (does not include book)

Heartsaver First Aid (CPR, AED and First Aid)

Thursday, June 7

5-10 p.m., RFAAS

\$65 (does not include book)

Heartsaver First Aid Refresher

Thursday, June 14

6-9 p.m., RFAAS

\$25 (does not include book)

Healthcare Provider Initial

Thursday, May 31

8 a.m.-5 p.m., RFAAS

\$60 (does not include book)

Three students minimum

Healthcare Provider Refresher

Thursday, June 28

6-10 p.m., RFAAS

\$25 (does not include book)

Three students minimum

CPR For Friends & Family

By request only—
noncertification



WEEK OF WELLNESS

A Week of Wellness

FREE

6-7:30 p.m.

River Falls Public Library

River Falls Area Hospital and River Falls Medical Clinic offer these free classes to help you get healthy and stay healthy.

■ **Monday, April 30: “Women and Hormones from Puberty to Menopause”**

Beth Shockey-Woll, OB/GYN, NP, will help women understand how hormones affect their bodies throughout their lives. Topics include puberty, hormonal contraception, PMS and menopause. Michelle Schneider, pharmacist at Freeman Drug, will discuss the use of bio-identical hormones throughout these life phases.

■ **Tuesday, May 1: “Weight Control”**

Is dieting driving you crazy? Tami Gregg, registered dietitian, River Falls Medical Clinic, will help you understand how to make food choices that keep you healthy and help you lose weight. A physical therapist from the Sports Medicine Rehabilitation & Wellness Center will show you how to complement your diet with exercise.

■ **Wednesday, May 2: “Competing at Your Highest Level—How to Prevent and Avoid Sports Injuries”**

Whether you're serious about your favorite sport or a more casual athlete, you don't want to get sidelined by injuries. Patrick D. Sura, MD, River Falls Medical Clinic, will explain how you can participate in your favorite sport competitively and safely. A physical therapist from the Sports Medicine Rehabilitation & Wellness Center at RFAH will be available for questions.

■ **Thursday, May 3: “Arthritis and Minimally Invasive Surgical Options for the Knee”**

William Schneider, MD, orthopedic surgeon, St. Croix Orthopaedics, will be presenting the various treatment options for arthritis. Schneider will primarily be discussing minimally invasive surgical options, using the knee as an example. There will be time for questions after the presentation.



To learn more or to register, visit www.riverfallsareahospital.com or call the Wellness Center at 715-426-4545.

Free clinic

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In addition to providing care, the clinic will go beyond the usual free clinic model by helping patients enroll in other assistance programs, such as Badger Care, or in national prescription assistance programs sponsored by drug companies. The clinic will also help connect patients with other local resources, such as food pantries and heat assistance programs.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

“Community support helped get the clinic started,” says Heather Logelin, director of the Kinnickinnic Health Foundation, which has spearheaded fundraising efforts for the Free Clinic. “In addition to our efforts, several community groups had their own fundraisers and donated the proceeds to the clinic. We will continue to need this financial assistance from the community to offer care to the low-income and uninsured in our area.”

In addition to funds, volunteers are needed. “We need volunteers with medical skills, such as doctors, physicians’ assistants and nurses,” says Mary Steele, the clinic’s volunteer



Local pharmacist, Leah Gavin, Rph, is working to ensure that Free Clinic patients have access to needed medications.

coordinator. “Fundraisers, copywriters, graphic designers and other nonclinical help are also needed. Several restaurants and churches have generously agreed to provide meals for the volunteers on clinic nights, and we need that type of support, too.”



To make a donation, call Heather Logelin at 715-426-4503. For more information about volunteering, call Mary Steele at 715-307-3949. To learn more about the Free Clinic, visit www.freeclinicpiercestcroix.org or call 715-307-3948. ❖

HOW TO REACH US

General Information715-425-6155
Kinnickinnic Foundation .715-426-4503
Sleep Center715-426-4696
Wellness & Fitness715-426-4545
Sports Medicine &
Rehabilitation.715-426-4537
The Birth Center715-426-4515
River Falls Medical Clinic.715-425-6701
Ellsworth Medical Clinic .715-273-5041
Spring Valley
Medical Clinic715-778-5591

For hospital information and services, visit www.riverfallsareahospital.com.

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Allina Hospitals & Clinics

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