

April 2019

Healthy Times

Once upon
a memory
Caregivers meet
to offer support



 Tri-County
Health Care

TCHC.org



Message from our
President & CEO,
Joel Beiswenger

Welcome to spring, everyone! Spring is a fantastic time to enjoy the renewal and regeneration of our environment, our communities and, after a long Minnesota winter, our psychological wellbeing. It's the same for us here at Tri-County Health Care, and this spring is the jumping off point for many exciting future opportunities.

You may have already heard the news that we are considering a significant building project. It's an exciting time at Tri-County. We have added new services, providers and technology. However, with all of these additions, our current building is bursting at the seams, and it no longer meets the needs of these services or the expectations of our patients, their families, and our communities.

Later in this edition of Healthy Times, you will read more about this project. Right now, we are evaluating all of our options, which include the possibility of a new healthcare facility at a new location or a substantial addition or renovation of the current building. Throughout this process, we welcome support and participation from our community, so we invite you to attend our upcoming forums to offer your input. Your feedback will help us make sure we build the best healthcare center to meet all of our needs long into the future.

We have also adopted a new vision for Tri-County Health Care: we will be your trusted partner for life. The vision is founded on four essential values that represent our expectations for the care we provide: to deliver exceptional customer service, to create a culture of ownership with everyone that we work with, to be strong financial stewards of our resources, and to be an active community partner in everything we do. We take this seriously. This is how we will grow into the future and be the absolute best we can be in everything that we do.

In this edition, you will also hear touching stories about caregivers of dementia patients and our Memory Loss Support Group for Caregivers, a heartwarming project to bring joy to our cancer patients, and the combination of Men's Night Out and Women's Day Out into a new event called Wellebrate, which is an opportunity to celebrate community wellness. I'm excited to introduce our keynote speaker for that evening, Lindsay Whalen, head coach of the Minnesota Gophers women's basketball team. Looking forward to seeing you on April 29 for this exciting event.

I wish you all a very happy and healthy spring and summer of 2019. I look forward to discussing with you our exciting future and thank you all for being great supporters of Tri-County Health Care, our mission and vision.

New vision upholds Tri-County Health Care's commitment to you

Tri-County Health Care will be your trusted partner for life. That is our promise to you and is also Tri-County Health Care's new vision statement. This statement joins our already existing mission statement: "Tri-County Health Care is committed to improving the health of the communities we serve."

Our vision and mission are the core of our organization. They represent all that we hope to accomplish. Using these statements, we have expanded upon four values that will be at the forefront of our care.

Exceptional Customer Experience: Our patients are our first priority. That is why we strive to give patients safe, high-quality care and excellent customer service while making it easily accessible and patient centered.

Culture of Ownership: The providers and staff at Tri-County believe in our purpose, and that idea extends through to all of the work they do in bringing you timely and consistent care. We'll make sure that future providers and staff also uphold this belief.

Adaptable Financial Stewardship: We can only accomplish the medical advances and

innovations we do by being responsible with our finances.

Active Community Partner: The community is our reason for existing. We belong to the community. Therefore, we want to be involved

and present in the community and work together to achieve our mission.

Caring for you – our customers and patients – isn't just our purpose, it's our privilege.

VISION

Tri-County Health Care will be your trusted partner for life.

			
Exceptional Customer Experience	Culture of Ownership	Adaptable Financial Stewardship	Active Community Partner
We will provide an excellent, consistent experience by delivering high quality, seamless care that is easily accessible in a family-oriented, patient-centered environment.	We will recruit and retain high quality team members who embody our spirit of ownership. We will provide timely, consistent communication in a manner reflecting our caring, collaborative nature.	We will take an innovative, progressive approach to health care in a financially responsible manner to ensure the continued viability of our health care system.	We will work collaboratively with our community partners to achieve our mission.



Nette Nelson (above left) with just a few of the many Tri-County Health Care employees who sponsored the cancer care bags.

Nette Nelson, a registered nurse at Tri-County Health Care and seller of Thirty-One merchandise, had an idea. One of Nette's family members was diagnosed with cancer in October, and from her perspective on both the nursing side and patient side, Nette saw how small touches can make the difference to those with cancer.

In the past, she has been joined by Thirty-One customers to help her sponsor bags for cancer patients at Tri-County. When Nette saw that Thirty-One was hosting a bag sale in February, she recognized that it was an opportunity to make a huge difference in the lives of patients.

She and fellow Thirty-One consultant April Damlo put a call out to all Tri-County employees asking them to purchase a bag stuffed with items to be given to a cancer patient. In three days, they had 100 bags sponsored.

"We wanted to do something that shows our employees care about our patients and their wellbeing," Nette said. "It means so much to people. It's something comforting during a down time."

April and Nette have stuffed the bags with various items, purchased with money from employees and donated from Tri-County, including an activity book, blanket or hat, water bottle, notebook and more.

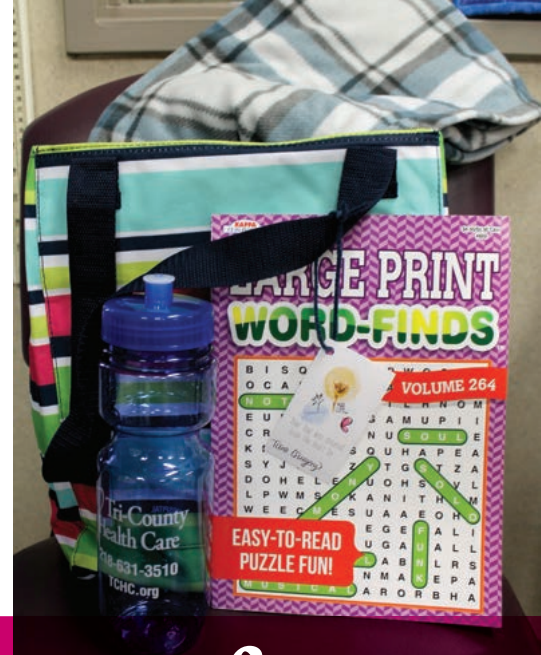
Each bag includes a tag with the name of the person who donated it and the department in which they work.

Betty Miller, a cancer patient who receives infusion therapy once a month at Tri-County Health Care, was one of the first to receive a sponsored bag.

"It's wonderful!" she said with a wide smile. "It makes us feel better to get a gift."

"We wanted to do something that shows our employees care about our patients and their wellbeing."

Nette Nelson, TCHC employee
Director with Thirty-One Gifts



Betty Miller, TCHC infusion therapy patient, with her cancer care bag.



Graydon and Lillian Pladson

Caregivers brave the journey of loved ones with dementia

Dementia affects millions of people across the U.S. each year, robbing people of their independence and the very memories that make them who they are. At its core, dementia describes symptoms that cause the loss of memory or other thinking skills that can take away a person's ability to perform everyday activities.

Though Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia, Brenda Packer, who facilitates the Memory Loss Support Group for Caregivers at Tri-County Health Care, explains that Alzheimer's is just one of many memory loss diseases.

"Dementia is an umbrella, and Alzheimer's is just one of the many different dementias. Like the differences between cancers," she said.

Brenda has experienced caregiving firsthand when her husband's father developed dementia.

Once the dementia diagnosis is confirmed, then begins a lengthy journey for that person as well as for those who are now tasked with caring for them. It's hard to know what to expect from one day to the next as they face the unknown and unpredictability of the disease that's stealing away their loved one.

Lillian's journey

Lillian Pladson's caregiving journey began in 2009 when her husband, Graydon, suffered a health emergency of an irregular heartbeat. His health continued to decline, leading to seizures and memory loss. As of now, he still recognizes his wife, but his thoughts are very much trapped in the past, and there are times he struggles to make sense.

Lillian was his primary caregiver up until three years ago when he was moved to a veteran's home in Fergus Falls. She tries to visit as much as she can. "It's the nicest place. I can feel free," she said. "They are so friendly and so helpful. If you go there, they're there to help you out too."

Graydon taught business classes at the tech college in Wadena for 30 years, and the students and instructors who have approached Lillian about her husband are a testament to how well he was liked. Though he no longer behaves like the man he once was, Lillian believes that he and the others with memory loss at the veteran's home have not lost the essence of who they are.

"They're still human beings," she said. "I think deep down, they still know what's going on."

"I call this a journey because when you are thrown into the situation, you have no idea what's down the road in front of you. That's why the support group is so important because you learn from the other people who are there, what they're going through."

Karen Leverington, Support Group Member

Karen's story

Karen Leverington's parents, William and Marlos Weiss, were married for 72 years. She described them as a quiet couple who would "give you the shirt off their back. If there was something that needed to be done, they'd be the first ones there to help."

In 2012, William developed early symptoms of Alzheimer's. Karen and her husband, Gerald, decided to add on to their home and encouraged her parents to sell their Pine River home and move in with them.

William's condition soon worsened. He forgot how to play checkers, a game he loved. He lost interest in listening to church services on the radio. He developed severe sundowners, where he had his days and nights mixed up.

After a long battle, William passed away in November of 2015 at the age of 95. Sadly, Marlos' health took a turn for the worse not long after.

"About two weeks after he passed away, she had full blown vascular dementia," Karen said. "She had been holding it together for his sake."

Being a vascular disease affecting her veins and arteries, Marlos' dementia caused small strokes and began to take a toll on her body. Karen and Gerald decided she needed more attentive care and moved her to an assisted living facility north of Wadena owned by Karen's daughter. After that, Marlos declined rapidly and passed away in March of 2017 at the age of 92.

"It's not easy, and the thing that you realize down the road is that you lose them twice," Karen said. "You lose them to the disease because most of the people that have Alzheimer's or dementia don't recognize their family after a time. We did not experience that. They knew us. But you lose them to the disease and you watch them suffer, and you suffer. Then eventually death comes and you lose them again."

"Once they're gone, you have all these thoughts of could I have done something else differently, could I have helped them more? You can't dwell on that. We did the best we could, and in the state they were in, they were happy."

You can't do it alone

Caregivers of a loved one with dementia have a huge load on their shoulders. Brenda recommends finding a support group to have a place to ease that load, even if just a little bit.

"It's reassuring to be in a group that can say that happened to me too. I was there. Or I felt that way too," Brenda said. "There's nobody that can say they know how somebody feels unless they've been on similar journeys."

Brenda focuses on education, helping caregivers learn what to expect, how to interact with their loved one, what financial or legal documents to get in order and explaining the different dementia diseases. She also makes sure to prioritize taking care of the caregiver.



Karen Leverington

"They think they can always do it all by themselves," she said. "I think the thing about the caregivers is they are very resilient people because this is a marathon."

Karen initially resisted going to the support group. "My husband kept telling me, 'You need to go to that support group, and I kept saying, 'I'm fine. I'm fine.' I didn't realize how I wasn't that fine."

Now, she has been going for almost four years, and she has developed deep friendships. After her parents passed away, she considered not going anymore, but she believes others can still learn from her experiences.

"I call this a journey because when you are thrown into the situation, you have no idea what's down the road in front of you," Karen said. "That's why the support group is so important because you learn from the other people who are there, what they're going through."

Lillian has also been attending the support group about four years, and she finds the companionship incredibly valuable. "I think you need some help. You're kind of alone," she said. "People know what you're going through. I don't think a lot of people realize there's other things involved with memory loss."

To sum up the support group, Karen uttered one final statement: "In group, you laugh together, you cry together, and you lift each other up."

"It's reassuring to be in a group that can say that happened to me too. I was there. Or I felt that way too. There's nobody that can say they know how somebody feels unless they've been on similar journeys."

Brenda Packer, Support Group Facilitator

If you are a caregiver of a loved one with dementia or a family or friend supporting a caregiver, you are invited to attend the Memory Loss Support Group for Caregivers. It meets the second Thursday of each month at 2:30 p.m. in the Wesley Conference Room at Tri-County Health Care. There is no signup, and you are not required to attend a set number of meetings. The group partners with the Alzheimer's Association, which provides a 24-hour hotline that caregivers of people with any type of dementia may call to ask questions or have consultations: 1-800-272-3900.



Tri-County Health Care faces exciting crossroads

TCHC pursuing options for expansion, new facility

Tri-County Health Care has been a long-standing healthcare leader in Wadena, Todd, and Otter Tail counties, serving patients starting in 1925 with the Wesley Hospital and later adding a new facility and clinics in Wadena and five additional towns. Tri-County Health Care belongs to its three-county region. It believes its patients deserve a facility that is as strong as the community in which it is located and reflects the quality of care they receive. However, the current facility in Wadena does not meet these expectations.

Tri-County has reached a crossroads. The current facility is outdated, cramped, inefficient and cannot accommodate growing services or keep up with changing healthcare needs. The options? Either cut back on services or make an investment in a new or remodeled facility and be a strong entity in Wadena and surrounding communities for years to come.

Tri-County has decided to be that strong entity.

Last year, Tri-County leaders began evaluating the needs of patients and how a facility can best meet them now and in the future. In the fall, the Board of Directors approved an investment in a new or remodeled clinic and hospital.

Upgrade now or cut back

Tri-County Health Care's top priority is giving its patients high-quality and efficient care. This becomes difficult when the building itself no longer reflects the excellent care that patients receive.

At nearly 50 years old, the main campus no longer fulfills the growing healthcare needs of modern patients. It faces obstacles such as an inefficient layout, operating rooms that are costly to update, hidden location, poor energy efficiency, lack of parking and limited room for expansion in its current location. These make it difficult to offer the most advanced procedures and services while upholding safe, high-quality care.

Health care itself is rapidly changing. For instance, when the current building was built 45 years ago in Wadena, patients who stayed in the hospital (inpatients) made up 90 percent of the care provided, and it was designed with that need in mind. Now, however, inpatients only make up 13 percent of its business, and outpatients offer the greatest growth opportunity.

In addition, the growing trend of patient-centered, multi-disciplinary continuity of care requires more departments to be available for outpatients. The current building does not provide enough space for outpatient needs or for the growth of care coordination services.

Both the hospital and Wesley building have been remodeled throughout the years, but they have limited options for expansion and updates. It is also expensive to update old facilities and difficult to remodel without causing major interruptions to patient services. Tri-County's early research has found that it will cost almost as much to update the current facility as it would to build a new clinic and hospital.

The vision

Tri-County Health Care is proud that it has remained independent in a world where healthcare mergers and acquisitions are happening across the industry. Almost 70 percent of hospitals in America are part of a large health system, according to The Business of Healthcare. And at a time when competing facilities are attracting patients to their newly constructed facilities, Tri-County needs to remain competitive.

“Our strength as a healthcare institution, charged with delivering care that is critical to the wellbeing of our cities, is driven by our communities. It is our reason to exist,” said Joel Beiswenger, Tri-County president and CEO. “Health care has evolved and continues to change at a fast-paced rate. Our plan for the future must not only reflect this change but anticipate tomorrow.”

Tri-County is evaluating all options and has begun looking at potential local sites for development.

Above all, the goal with this project is to build the rural health care center of the future to adapt and meet patient needs for another 100 years. The new space will be designed as a healing environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle for everyone. It will include modern strategies for delivering the best patient experience possible while being efficient and flexible, evolving as health care evolves. Finally, it will serve as a beacon of wellness for generations to come.

More details will be announced as they become available.



Wesley Hospital



Hospital construction

Wesley Hospital groundbreaking.



“Health care has evolved and continues to change at a fast-paced rate. Our plan for the future must not only reflect this change but anticipate tomorrow.”

Joel Beiswenger, TCHC President and CEO



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*Our patients are our priority,
and award-winning quality health
care is what they deserve.*



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Well **ebrate**

 **Tri-County Health Care**

You're invited to attend Tri-County Health Care's new community event! A combination of **Men's Night Out** and **Women's Day Out**, its purpose is to promote and celebrate wellness in local communities.

Featuring: **Lindsay Whalen**

Lindsay Whalen is a four-time Minnesota Lynx WNBA champion and two-time Olympic gold medalist. She is a five-time WNBA all-star and was the first player in WNBA history to achieve 5,000-plus points, 2,000-plus assists and 1,500-plus rebounds.

During Whalen's career as a Minnesota Gopher, she was a three-time Academic All-Big Ten First Team and led the Gophers to the NCAA tournament three straight years, including its first-ever Final Four appearance in 2004. She returned to the U of M in the fall of 2018 as the women's basketball head coach.

Monday, April 29 5 – 8 p.m.

WDC Middle/High School 600 Colfax Ave. SW, Wadena, MN
5 – 6 p.m. Meet & Greet | Educational Booths | Light Meal
6:15 – 8 p.m. Tri-County Talks | Keynote with Lindsay Whalen

No Pre-Registration Required

*In order to protect our student athletes and follow NCAA regulations, all high school student athletes and their families are restricted from receiving an autograph or having their picture taken with Whalen.



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To request disability accommodation, email
contact@tchc.org at least 14 days prior to the event.