

December 2020

Healthy Times

Orthopedic
Milestone
300th Joint Replacement

 Tri-County
Health Care
TCHC.org



Message from our President & CEO, Joel Beiswenger

“We live in interesting times – a statement that grows more relevant as you read this edition of Healthy Times. It’s hard to envision a more interesting year than 2020. We started the year with an exciting presentation to the community about our plans to construct a new hospital, done at a community invitation event held in the space now known as Oma’s Bakery. We had the opportunity to showcase not only a presentation of our proposed new facility and site but also layouts for several areas of the facility. Unfortunately, many members of the community were unable to attend because it took place in the middle of a snowstorm. Obviously, this was foreshadowing the uncertainty of 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to delay and suspend the planning of our building project. It was a tough decision to make, but necessary to allow focus on the mission-critical activities of the pandemic. I am happy to report that we have re-engaged with our building plans, with the financing still a work in progress. We expect to break ground in the spring of 2021 and have the building completed within approximately two years.

We look forward to a ribbon-cutting in the winter of 2023. More information about our building project is in this issue of Healthy Times. Our articles will also cover a wide range of health-related topics and updates on our services at Tri-County Health Care.

I cannot express how proud I am of the Tri-County Health Care family for our efforts to work through the challenges brought before us. When we entered the pandemic, I read an interesting article indicating two factors to how a health system would respond to something like a pandemic.

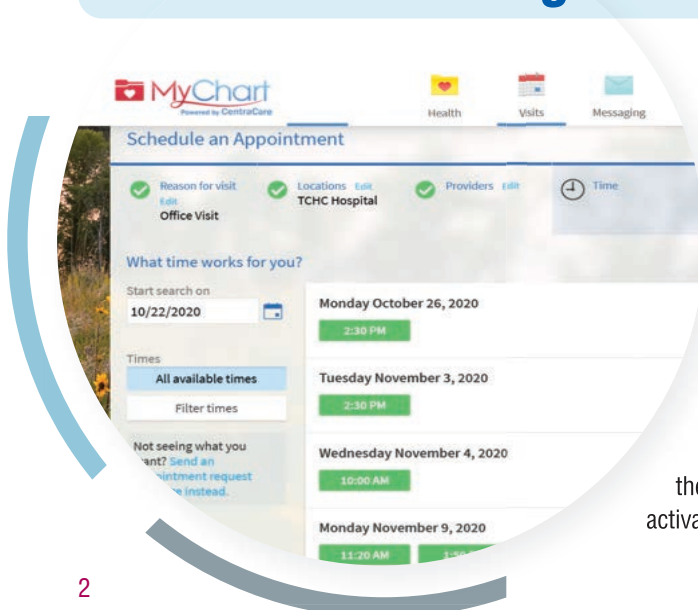
One is based on an organization’s culture and the type of people involved; great people will always rise to the occasion. In our case, that has absolutely been the case. The value of our Tri-County Health Care team has displayed itself in an unbelievable fashion.

The second factor was that even though people will rise to the occasion, they can only rise as far as the value of their training. That concept posed concern because even though we do disaster preparedness training on a regular basis, we have never practiced for a global pandemic and all of its impacts and implications. Again, I have pride in this organization. Our planning, policies, and procedures have worked despite the nature of this emergency. As a community member and hopefully, a consumer of Tri-County Health Care services, you can join me in feeling a sense of pride. Feel assured that our staff truly care about their work, do it well, and stand ready to serve you from every perspective.

Despite the recent resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic in our area, we continue to care for patients, communities and our staff with excellent service. This Healthy Times will feature our orthopedics team, led by Dr. Robertson, and how they recently celebrated their 300th joint replacement in just two years. Additionally, we are excited about expanding our partnership with the CentraCare Heart & Vascular Center. Pediatric rehabilitation is also growing with new staff additions, and a new general surgeon and ReadyCare provider also joined our team. Finally, we are always excited to spotlight our hardworking nurses by highlighting our recent DAISY Award winners.

These are all great examples of the exceptional care Tri-County Health Care offers to our communities. We continue to take pride in meeting our mission of improving the health of our communities, and through the pandemic, safeguarding that health. We take these challenges seriously, and thank you for your trust and support of Tri-County Health Care. I hope everyone continues to be safe. Remember to practice the pandemic mitigation tactics, including social distancing and mask-wearing. Continue to take great care of yourself through these difficult times. Eat well, get rest, exercise, and connect with friends and family through safe means. God bless you all, and here’s to wishing you the happiest of holiday seasons.

Direct Scheduling Schedule your appointments online



Scheduling an appointment for primary care has never been easier. Tri-County Health Care is excited to introduce patients to direct scheduling through MyChart.

Patients who need to visit with their primary care provider can now schedule an appointment directly by using their provider’s calendar.

To schedule an appointment, log into MyChart on a computer, tablet or smartphone. Click on the appointments tab, then schedule an appointment and follow the prompts. Select the time you prefer on your provider’s calendar. No phone call is needed!

MyChart also allows patients to view their lab results, refill medications, message their provider and more. Patients can sign up online at TCHC.org/MyChart or request an activation code at their next clinic visit.

Cardiology keeps beating: Expanding access to heart health

A strong and healthy heart is central to your well-being. When you come to Tri-County Health Care with questions or concerns, we want you to know your heart is in the right hands.

That is why Tri-County Health Care has expanded its partnership with the top-ranked CentraCare Heart & Vascular Center to provide weekly coverage in Wadena. U.S. News & World Report ranked CentraCare in the nation's Top-50 for cardiology and heart surgery in an annual ranking.

The cardiology providers will offer a range of services, including diagnostic testing like EKGs, Holter Monitoring and vascular ultrasounds, and offer advice on cardiac nutrition and atrial fibrillation management. Additionally,

our cardiologist providers can answer questions about other heart-related procedures.

"We are excited to team up with the top-ranked staff from the CentraCare Heart & Vascular Center," said Jose Alba, Chief Ambulatory Officer at Tri-County. "This new expansion allows patients to receive world-class cardiovascular care close to home, forgoing the need to travel long distances." Patients do not need a referral to receive cardiology care.

In collaboration with



Thom Dahle,
M.D.



Mark Johnson,
M.D.



John Mahowald,
M.D.



Wade Schmidt,
M.D.



Joseph Nguyen,
M.D.



Brian Stegman,
M.D.



Rebecca Wirtz,
APRN, CNP



Yaga Saine,
APRN, CNP

To schedule an appointment with the cardiology team at Tri-County Health Care, call **218-631-7579**.



FOR EXTRAORDINARY NURSES

**HONORING NURSES INTERNATIONALLY
IN MEMORY OF J. PATRICK BARNES**

Tri-County Health Care began honoring exceptional nurses with The DAISY Award last year. This international recognition program celebrates the compassion and skill nurses bring to patients and families every day. Throughout the year, patients are encouraged to nominate nurses who they feel went above and beyond what was expected. If you would like to nominate one of our nurses for this award, please visit TCHC.org/daisy to submit your story.

With great pride, Tri-County Health Care has named two DAISY Award winners in 2020 – Brittany Wegscheid and Sonia Mordh.

(Stories have been edited for length and clarity)

May 2020

Brittany's nomination involved a 4-year-old boy who hit his head and presented to the Emergency Room with a concussion. He ended up needing an ambulance transfer to the Twin Cities. Brittany prepared and calmed the boy and his mother. "The paramedics came in the room and began talking to me, but I couldn't hear a word they were saying, as tears rolled down my cheek. I felt someone grab both of my hands and say 'Mom, they're ready to take off now. Remember to breathe. He needs you.



Brittany Wegscheid, RN



Sonia Mordh, RN

"You've got this; you've got this," the nomination read. "On a day that was so scary and still brings tears to my eyes, Brittany was able to help find the calm in the storm. When I think of what the definition of a person who went above and beyond her job - I will forever think of Brittany. From the bottom of my heart, thank you, Brittany, for every single moment of that day. Our family will be forever grateful."

October 2020

Sonia's nomination: "Sonia was amazing to have as a nurse when I was in recovery after having my first baby. She was so sweet, and it was evident she was intent on providing the best care for both my baby and I. Sonia was so helpful with teaching us and helping us navigate the first day with a newborn. She was a big help with breastfeeding, diaper changes and everything in between! She always made sure baby, dad and I were comfortable. It was clear that Sonia was passionate about her job and providing the best patient care possible!"



Orthopedics celebrates 300th joint replacement

Our joints work hard. Often, we take our shoulders, knees and hips for granted. We may think they're just a bundle of bone and flesh. We usually only take notice when they stop working. For millions of people, joint pain is a regular occurrence. An unlucky few experience so much pain that replacing a shoulder or a hip is inevitable. Just the thought of replacing such a vital part of the body generates anxiety. Will it hurt? Will my range of motion be the same? How long will my life be on hold?

At Tri-County Health Care, the Tri Orthopedics team recently completed its 300th joint replacement, a milestone reached in record time. Ben Robertson, M.D., and his team were surprised to see the numbers rise so quickly. Although this is an impressive achievement, the team is even prouder of their constant refinement of the patient experience.

"The growth of it has been exciting, not from a number's perspective, but from the enthusiasm of everyone involved," said Dr. Robertson.

Since its inception in 2018, the Tri Orthopedics team has seen a steady increase in surgeries. In 2019 they completed 138 surgeries, 77 of which were total knee replacements. This procedure proves to be the most popular, with another 55 completed in 2020.

Tri Orthopedics team is about administering top tier care with as little pain as possible. One area the team has made significant strides in is patient recovery. When the program first started, patients were staying in the hospital three days to recover. Now, they typically only stay overnight. This progression has been exciting for patients considering joint replacement.

Tri Orthopedics has recently been utilizing techniques that cause less muscle damage, allowing for quicker recovery with less pain.

Lorinda Zigan, PA-C, assists Dr. Robertson with all aspects of orthopedic care. She has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the community regarding their work and rehabilitation process. Many people are happy to have these procedures done locally rather than travel to locations like Fargo, St. Cloud or Brainerd.

When asked about how patients should manage anxiety over an upcoming surgery, Dr. Robertson explained that being nervous about having a joint replacement is normal. While the procedures are still major surgery, it has become more common with shorter hospital stays and better recovery practices. Anxiety is a natural response to surgery; education is how that it is alleviated. Explaining the options thoroughly while answering questions can be the best way to put those nerves to rest.

Joint replacement can seem like a daunting task. These individuals have stepped forward to tell their experience with Tri Orthopedics. Their goal is to inform after going through the process firsthand. Getting a joint replaced does not mean months of misery but rather an opportunity to enjoy life to its fullest extent.

Emily Larson needed help, but the thought of joint replacement filled her with a great deal of anxiety. After attending one of Dr. Robertson's presentations on joint replacement, she felt much more confident. Emily needed knee replacement surgery; the thought of having surgery on such a vital part of the body was unnerving. "What helped me at the time was that I didn't know how a knee was replaced. Dr. Robertson explained it is like capping a tooth rather than tearing my leg apart," said Emily.

For Emily, simple things like getting out of a vehicle were once tough to achieve. She recalls having to loosen her knee for about a minute before exiting a car. That challenge is a thing of the past. Now, Emily can enjoy time with her grandchildren without excuses. She can exercise and take on the outdoors without her knee slowing her down. Before surgery, Emily didn't

want to put her life on hold. Putting a strain on her family while also stepping away from work seemed like a burden. When she finally decided to go ahead with surgery, everything went much smoother than expected. After a month, she was able to hoist herself into the cab of her husband's semi-truck.

Emily's surgery took place in August 2020. In only a couple of months, she has already returned to work. She was amazed by how little pain she felt. "I'm so surprised about having a major surgery and being pain-free and nothing was as bad as I thought it would be," said Emily.

"I'm so surprised about having a major surgery and being pain-free and nothing was as bad as I thought it would be."

Emily Larson,
TCHC Ortho Patient



Tammy Hatten worked with Dr. Robertson's team in February 2020 when she needed a hip replacement. Tammy has recovered fully and is doing better than ever. The hip replacement had a tremendous effect on her day to day life. Like many, Tammy put off the procedure due to her young age.

Tammy is an employee of Tri-County Health Care and is well-versed with staff and services available throughout the organization. From start to finish, the process was easy and efficient. "I chose Dr. Robertson, not only because I work here, but because I heard great things about him, as well as the approach he uses," said Tammy.

Before surgery, Tammy was diagnosed with end-stage osteoarthritis in her right hip. In consultation, Dr. Robertson answered questions and provided options. The decision was to go ahead with the surgery. After surgery, Tammy experienced some range of motion issues, so she got a physical therapy referral. Things continued to improve each day. The process was such a success; it had Tammy encouraging everyone experiencing joint problems to set up a consultation. "It will be the best decision you make for your joint health!" she said.

"I chose Dr. Robertson, not only because I work here, but because I heard great things about him, as well as the approach he uses."

Tammy Hatten,
TCHC Ortho Patient



Sharon Steeke always had pain in her arm. The problem continued to mount, making routine tasks a painful chore. After enduring pain in her shoulder for so long, she decided to do something about it. Sharon set up an appointment at Perham Health. She was told she had arthritis; a disappointing diagnosis that would

have to be tolerated.

After receiving some very positive feedback from a relative, she learned Tri Orthopedics offered shoulder replacements, one of the few local options for this procedure. After a consultation, Sharon had her shoulder replaced. The delicate process only ended up requiring five weeks of her time.

"I wish I would have done it sooner."

Sharon Steeke,
TCHC Ortho Patient

Sharon praised the orthopedics team for their extensive knowledge and kindness. "I wish I would have done it sooner," said Sharon. She recommends everyone reach out to Dr. Robertson and his team for a consultation.

For more information about Tri Orthopedics, call **218-631-3510** or visit **TCHC.org/ortho**.



"The growth of it has been exciting, not from a number's perspective, but from the enthusiasm of everyone involved."

Ben Robertson, M.D., TCHC Orthopedic Surgeon



Birds-eye view of the future building site courtesy of Vivid North Aerial Photography, LLC.

Back on track: New hospital planning resumes

There was a mountain of excitement surrounding the new building project for Tri-County Health Care at the beginning of 2020. That excitement started with showcasing mocked-up room layouts for community members. The focus changed in a hurry when the COVID-19 pandemic became a global crisis.

Just weeks after shifting gears to focus on the crisis, Tri-County made the difficult decision to suspend the planning of the project. The key to the decision came when looking at Tri-County's mission, which is to be committed to improving the health of the communities we serve. That changed to safeguarding the health of the communities we serve and abiding by the vision of being "your trusted partner for life."

"We know that right now, our mission-critical status is about managing this emergency with the COVID-19 crisis," said Tri-County President and CEO Joel Beiswenger during the announcement on April 1. "Our first commitment is to the present needs of our patients, our communities and our staff, and we need to have our focus on those goals at this critical time."

Tri-County spent the next two months developing new processes and procedures to protect staff and patients during the pandemic. While doing so, it also gave a unique perspective on the planning process for the new building. Seeing what it was like to battle an airborne health risk like COVID-19 gave new ideas and potential redesigns to consider when reviewing the new building.

The planning work resumed over the summer. Much has been learned about airborne illnesses like COVID-19 and this new information guided important decisions in regard to entrances, layout, and the general flow of the new building.

The one area that did change was in the air handling systems, where new items can be added to create an even safer environment.

"We are excited to recognize that, for a minimal impact on the total budget, we will have one of the safest health care facilities in the state of Minnesota when we have completed the new building," Joel said.

Another update announced in the fall was receiving state support for new road accesses. This support came through the 2020 bonding bill.

Thank you to Representative John Poston and all the area legislators who supported this effort.

Tri-County would also like to thank local groups including Wadena County, the City of Wadena and Otter Tail County, for their support through the process.

"We are highly confident that this will create a safe and highly accessible access point for our new facility," Joel said.

With the project back on track, Tri-County expects to break ground in the spring of 2021 and have the building completed within approximately two years. There is much anticipation about this new facility, and for good reason. This building will help modernize health care in the area and in the communities Tri-County serves for decades to come.



Clearing has begun on the site to prepare for future ground-breaking and construction.



Local contractor Kern & Tabery Inc. start the demolition process.

Pediatric Rehab

Play, learn & grow!

Raising a child is undoubtedly a challenging task. This challenge is made even more difficult when it is discovered that something is amiss... Perhaps the child has difficulty crawling. Maybe it's taking a little too long for those first few words. These moments of developmental uncertainty can lead to major anxiety for parents. The Pediatric Rehabilitation team at Tri-County Health Care specializes in helping children reach their true potential. Their experts know exactly how to identify and diagnose a range of developmental issues in children.

Eliza & Pediatric Rehab

Eliza Koning has been utilizing pediatric rehab for a little over a year and has improved her mobility, speech and motor skills. Eliza was born with Tetrasomy 18p, a rare chromosome abnormality similar to down syndrome. This condition is so rare that the family's geneticist has only worked with a handful of children suffering from complications associated with it.

Tetrasomy 18p affects several parts of the body. It typically leads to feeding problems in addition to delayed development. It can severely impact muscle tone, creating potential mobility problems in young children, preventing them from crawling and walking.

"She's made a lot of improvements and big strides," commented Ashley Koning, Eliza's Mother. Recently, she's been able to stand on her own and even walk.

After utilizing early intervention at Tri-County, Eliza has been seeing a trio of therapy professionals within each discipline of pediatric rehab. Eliza needed help in each area, so a comprehensive plan was developed to help get her playing, talking and up and moving around.

Occupational Therapy During her appointments, Eliza visits Occupational Therapists, Caitlyn Wolter and Kathryn Boutiette and works on the skills she needs for everyday life. They make sure that every kiddo can walk, run, climb, spin, and most importantly, play! Caitlyn often works with Eliza on her fine motor skills, including the grasping of items like blocks and toys. She also assists her with visual-motor skills, which are necessary for careful hand-eye coordination.

Speech Therapy Speech-Language Pathologist Meghan Current-Cary has been working with Eliza on her feeding and swallowing. It's important to remember that speech not only covers verbal communication but a variety of oral problems. Eliza has significantly improved and has now moved on to expressive and receptive language skills. Meghan hopes to help Eliza utter her first words soon.

Physical Therapy Physical therapy is all about gross motor skills, the big movements required for basic mobility. Without a grasp on gross motor skills, walking is nearly impossible. With the help of Physical Therapist Stacey Callahan, Eliza has mastered standing up on her own and now can walk with the aid of a walker. Her core strength continues to grow each day. Stacey predicts this trend of improvement will continue.

Accountability and growing stronger The pediatric rehab team praises Eliza for her growth. She's come a long way, and much of the progress can be attributed to her family. Caitlyn explained that family follow-through is one of the most important aspects of care as strength building requires daily effort. "Fortunately, Eliza's family has been so good working with her at home," explained Caitlyn. Daily play, combined with regular check-ups, has allowed Eliza to meet many of her goals.

Eliza is the youngest of four children and they do a great job including her in playtime and that's often the best medicine. It builds strength and engages muscles, something that is very important with Eliza's condition. Stacey and Caitlyn agree that play is the best way to refine both fine and gross motor skills. Eliza is very independent. She is very aware of her surroundings, can somewhat communicate her wants and needs and may just need a little help. "If Eliza decides she's going to do something, she does it," said Stacey.

Free Screening Parents interested in a pediatric rehab consultation should reserve a screening by calling **218-631-7475**. Children will have the opportunity to work with speech, physical and occupational therapy. After the examination, the team will provide a recommendation to the parents.



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care is what they deserve.*



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In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, Tri-County Health Care is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Welcome new providers!



Travis Swartz, DO

General Surgery

Medical school: Lake Erie College of
Osteopathic Medicine

Residency: University of North Dakota

Undergraduate school: University of
Michigan



Matt Cary, FNP

ReadyCare

Board Certification: American
Association of Nurse Practitioners

Undergraduate and Graduate school:
College of St. Scholastica

What inspired you to get into medicine? It came down to having an overall desire to help people and finding the best way I could do that. I had an anatomy teacher in high school who was a retired physician and working with him inspired me that medicine and surgery could be my route toward helping people.

Why did you choose Tri-County Health Care? I grew up in a small town and was looking for a chance to be part of one again. I like having close-knit relationships and that is what TCHC and this area offer. It's an excellent opportunity to get involved and serve the community I'm living and working in. Being here is like being home.

What do you like to do in your downtime? I enjoy spending time with my family, lake activities, fishing, golf and remodeling homes.

What do you enjoy most about working in the medical field? The everyday challenges. It is kind of like being a modern-day detective with clues and information and examining the data to come up with the best answer for the patient. I enjoy using physical tools and everything that I have learned to interpret the data and come up with a diagnosis and treatment for the patient.

What do you like to do in your downtime? I enjoy camping with my wife. I have also started to get interested in gardening and woodworking. I like jogging and would like to get more into mountain biking.

What is an interesting, unique or fun thing that most people do not know about you? I really enjoy trivia and other nerdy pursuits. I love learning new things and being open to the curveballs that life throws at you.