

October 2018

Healthy Times



Tri Orthopedics
Moving in the right direction

 Tri-County
Health Care
TCHC.org



Message from our
President & CEO,
Joel Beiswenger

Hi there! What's new? This common greeting, often meant as a simple, polite gesture, has special meaning for Tri-County Health Care at this time. In this edition of Healthy Times, we are excited to highlight several new programs that we are bringing to you, our patients, and our communities in order to help achieve our mission of improving the health of the communities we serve.

You will read about changes to our physician staffing in the emergency department. For the past few years, we have staffed the ED with family physicians from our local clinics as well as with temporary physicians from around the region through a contracted staffing firm. This change will now allow us to provide consistent staffing.

I am excited to say that as of Oct. 1, five of our own full-time physicians now share the staffing of the department on a 100-percent basis. To highlight this, you will meet Teddy Jennings, a stroke patient who was saved by our wonderful team of providers and staff in the ED.

Another exciting new service is expansion of our orthopedics program with the full-time addition of Ben Robertson, M.D., who has been coming to Tri-County Health Care for the past decade, and a core team of support personnel. This will deliver even more services right here close to home.

We also rolled out a new virtual clinic in September, which we call eClinic, to help solve the minor urgent care issues that you may have.

All of these additions enhance the scope of our services, which allows us to serve you even better than we have in the past.

Finally, in honor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, you'll meet Gretchen Noon, who is in the midst of a courageous battle with the disease.

I hope you enjoy this fall 2018 edition of Healthy Times and celebrate with us all of these exciting new services and opportunities. Thank you, and have a great fall!

Skip the trip! Tri-County Health Care eClinic

Tri-County Health Care's new eClinic is a convenient and cost-effective way for area residents ages 2 to 65 to receive health care from an expert provider. For a fee of \$25, patients can be treated virtually for common health conditions including cold and flu, pink eye, allergies, heartburn, bladder infections and more. All you need is an internet connection and 5 to 10 minutes to complete an online interview process that collects information related to your condition.

Launched in partnership with Zipnosis, which helps leading health systems provide online access to health care services, TCHC's eClinic provides convenient online diagnosis and treatment services by connecting patients virtually with trusted providers. Patients first complete a brief online interview that asks their symptoms and health history. After symptoms have been reviewed, an expert on-call doctor or nurse practitioner will return a treatment plan. The service will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information, visit TCHC.org/ecclinic.





Gretchen Noon rests amidst her cherished dragonfly decorations that adorn her covered porch.



Having faith in the midst of cancer

When Gretchen Noon needs a peaceful place for rest and recovery, her quaint Wadena home serves as her sanctuary. Gentle music drifts across her covered porch strewn with several opened books and sentimental dragonfly decorations. The wind rustles the trees as she reads a hanging sign that says, "Having hope will give you courage. Having faith will give you strength." Her soft hat wards off the chill, keeping her warm now that her hair is gone.

Gretchen is currently battling a rare form of breast cancer and is braced for many months of aggressive treatment.

Discovering the disease

In July of 2017, Gretchen went in for her regular mammogram. It came back clear. But nine months later in April, she felt a lump on her breast. She made an appointment with Dawn Dahlgren-Roemmich, certified nurse midwife, and a mammogram and ultrasound identified not one but two large lumps.

Gretchen learned that her cancer is incredibly rare, a strain called medullary carcinoma, which occurs in only 3-5 percent of breast cancers, according to breastcancer.org.

"I felt very overwhelmed at first with the information, and because I had larger lumps, things progressed very fast," she said.

Fortunately, she was told her cancer was stage one and that the prognosis was good with treatment. She consulted with Wade Swenson, M.D., who recommended chemotherapy before surgery.

The first four rounds contained two types of aggressive chemo, which were administered every 21 days.

"The ladies (in ambulatory care) are great. They let me bring music. They turn down the lights. I usually sleep because the last time it took over four hours. They knew this would be very harsh and hard," she said. "It's hard, very hard on your body. Then you lose your hair. By three weeks after my first chemo, I was losing my hair."

After Gretchen finished four rounds of chemo, she had another ultrasound. It showed that her lumps had diminished in size.

"I'm thankful, so very thankful," she said with a smile. "It's good news."

Gretchen then began the process of four more rounds of chemo, this time a weaker blend. After that, she will undergo a lumpectomy followed by radiation therapy. In the end, it will have been an almost year-long process.

Gretchen found one of the hardest parts of treatment to be the side effects of chemo. They strain her body physically and make her more vulnerable to illness. As a result, contracting a mild virus like a cold could send her to the hospital.

"You have to wear a mask, and of course people stare at you," she said. "You can do things, but you feel like you have to be so cautious because I didn't want to get sick."

Receiving encouragement

Knowing her peaceful porch awaits her after treatment, Gretchen is thankful chemo is available right in Wadena so she doesn't have to travel long distances.

"They've been just wonderful and supportive. You see people that know you when you walk in and greet you and ask how you're doing," she said.

To those in the community who might wonder about self-exams or who are experiencing their own medical challenge, Gretchen offered encouragement.

"It is very important to do self-exams and catch that early. Diagnosis is very important. Early diagnosis is key," she said. "And just having the support of your family and friends and getting up every day and being thankful for something even though it's tough. For me, getting fresh air and sunshine and exercise, even though it's hard, is important."

Gretchen's daughter, Brittney, calls frequently and visits on weekends, while her husband Ron escorts her to chemo treatment and provides encouragement. It's that support and more that keeps Gretchen motivated to beat her affliction.

"I have a strong Christian faith, and I have many friends who come visit me and pray for me. My own family is very supportive," she said. "People have called and visited when they can. The letters, the cards, people coming and bringing things. It's just seeing the people and the encouragement and letting me know they're praying and thinking of me. That's the most important thing."



Full orthopedic services, total joints come to Wadena

Junelle Jackson received total joint replacements in both knees and her hip.

Total joint replacements, fracture care, ACL reconstruction – all this and more are now offered full time at Tri-County Health Care through its new Tri Orthopedics program. The service was made complete with the transition of orthopedic surgeon Ben Robertson, M.D., from a visiting specialist to a full-time provider.

Most notably, the lineup of services includes total joint replacements, which remove a damaged or arthritic joint and swap it with a prosthetic device designed to move and function like that of a healthy joint. This is a reliable option for when physical therapy, medication or life modifications don't help. Dr. Robertson has special training in direct anterior hip, Oxford knee and reverse total shoulder replacements.

Other orthopedic services offered include:

- Carpal tunnel release
- Ganglion cyst removal
- Bunion and hammertoe corrections
- Rotator cuff repair
- ACL reconstruction
- Arthroscopy procedures
- Fracture care
- Osteoarthritis care
- Repetitive use/sports injuries

Getting her life back

Junelle Jackson of Wadena loves being outside, push mowing the lawn, and running around with her grandsons. She recently retired after 35 years of teaching at Wadena-Deer Creek, with 15 of those spent in kindergarten and 20 in second grade. But several years ago in 2012, she could barely function in everyday life, much less keep up with her students, because of intense pain in her knees.

"I'm not a person to just sit. I think that was the hardest when my knees hurt," she said. "I found myself coming home from school and just sitting until it's time to go to bed. And that's not me. I just lost my life."

It turns out Junelle suffered from arthritis in both knees, which progressed to bone rubbing against bone. She knew her mother and aunt had sought Dr. Robertson for knee replacements, and she witnessed the new life it gave them, so she decided to see him too.

Dr. Robertson tried cortisone injections and other options first to prolong surgery as much as possible, but it soon got to the point where nothing could take the pain away. He determined it was time and recommended replacing both knees simultaneously. So she did.

"It was amazing. The pain from the surgery was less than the pain I was suffering every single day. It was a no-brainer to go," she said. "It was on June 5, and I was back in school by the end of August. At the time, I was teaching kindergarten. I was able to get back on the floor. We were singing, dancing like you do in kindergarten. I was like a brand-new person."

In 2016, her right hip began to exhibit the same painful symptoms her knees once had. She said there was “absolutely no question” in going back to Dr. Robertson. He performed a hip replacement in June, and by August, she was strolling about the Minnesota State Fair and taking her dogs for much-loved walks.

“Before I had my knees done or my hip, there was no way I could make it down the street and back,” she said. “Life is just awesome now.”

‘It’s going to be amazing in Wadena’

Over the years, because of the success Junelle had with Dr. Robertson, she has sent countless people his way. Anytime a friend or family member complains of severe joint pain, she’s there with a glowing recommendation.

“There’s no question in my mind,” she said. “He is just amazing. He won’t rush into the surgery. He tried everything he could to get the pain to go away. He’s always smiling. He always greets you by name. He never forgets who you are. He’s just so kind, patient. You’re so comfortable with him.”

Junelle also worked closely with the joint care coordinator, Medley Shamp, RN. She praised Medley’s kind heart and diligence in her care. “She is just a honey,” Junelle said. “We just held each other and cried because she knew what I was feeling. She becomes an instant friend.” Then she expressed gratitude for the entire team and added, “I love everybody that’s here.”

Junelle’s surgeries and daily joint camps took place in Brainerd where Dr. Robertson practiced at the time. Though she absolutely loved her experience there, she noted that the 45-minute drive was inconvenient. So when she heard that total joints and orthopedics were coming to Wadena, she was ecstatic.



Ben Robertson, M.D.

“At first, I didn’t believe it. I just thought it was too good to be true,” she said. “But I just think it is the best thing that Tri-County could do is to get him here, to get his staff, that orthopedics is all right here in town. It’s going to be amazing in Wadena.

“We had to have a coach for joint camp, and it was hard for me to get a coach because they had to drive every single day. But now being here in town, your coaches are available, your rehab, your hospitalization, your after appointments. Like I said, I was amazed. It’s the best thing they could have ever done.”

If you’re experiencing joint or muscle pain, don’t wait any longer. Dr. Robertson and Tri Orthopedics can help take it away and return you to the life you love.

To learn more, visit TCHC.org/ortho or call 218-631-3510.

Meet your team

Tri Orthopedics uses a patient-centered, team-based approach to meet your orthopedic needs, including pre-surgery education, procedures and follow-up care. From radiology to the nursing staff to the surgeon to physical therapy, you’ll receive support and motivation from a team of experts that’s eager to help improve your quality of life.

TriORTHOPEDICS



Ben Robertson, M.D.: Dr. Robertson’s number-one goal in caring for you as his patient is to treat you just like family. This means giving you compassionate care, staying up to date on cutting-edge treatments, and doing everything he can to give you desirable outcomes. He specializes in operative and non-operative interventions and is board certified through the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery.



Lorinda Zigan, PA-C: TCHC is thrilled to welcome Lorinda back to the team! Her primary motivator as a health care provider is to help others. She’ll do this by making sure you understand and are comfortable with your care throughout your orthopedic journey. She is board certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.



Medley Shamp, RN: Medley is your one-stop shop for your Tri Orthopedics experience. Her goal is to make sure you have everything you need to succeed, whether it’s support and education, ample time to ask questions or hands-on involvement as a partner in your care.



Jeremy Meyer, DPT: Jeremy, along with his talented rehabilitation team, is devoted to helping you achieve functionality of your muscles and joints. He looks forward to walking you through the journey of regaining mobility and returning to life.



Teddy Jennings and his wife, Rita, pictured with Tri-County staff.



Rita and Teddy Jennings

Stroke victim receives help in time for incredible recovery

Teddy Jennings of Ottertail awoke on an ordinary day in early April and moseyed into the kitchen, which his wife, Rita, already occupied. But as he sat at the table, his legs suddenly felt as though they weighed 300 pounds and he lost the ability to speak. He and Rita locked eyes.

A nurse's aide who had just put in a 12-hour shift at a group home, Rita immediately recognized what was happening.

"I said, 'You're having a stroke. You're going to the ER,'" she said. "I put him in my car and sped over here as fast as I could go. I don't know how I got him in the car. Half dragged, half carried. All I knew, I didn't have time to waste."

Rita helped Teddy hobble into the emergency department waiting room at TCHC. As soon as she told the receptionist, "He's having a stroke," the ED staff jumped into action.

Dennis Faith, M.D., and Julie Stevens, registered nurse and nursing supervisor, immediately connected with the St. Cloud Hospital Stroke Center through Telestroke and started Teddy on a clot-busting medication. Rita was allowed to stay by his side through it all.

Soon after, Cole Lugert, paramedic, and Chad Olson, EMT, transported Teddy to St. Cloud. "They were fantastic (in the ambulance)," Teddy said. "These guys were so reassuring and so caring and monitoring all the time. Kind of blew me away."

Communication remained open between Tri-County and St. Cloud so that when Teddy arrived, St. Cloud was completely prepared and knew exactly what to do to continue his care. They took him directly to the

ICU, where he stayed for three days. Two days later, he was headed home.

"I was told over and over, 'You got there in time,'" he said. "You've got a window to get this clot-buster help, and had I waited a couple hours, they told me at St. Cloud, 'You'd be in a nursing home.' So what they did here at Tri-County, right here, set the stage for my recovery."

Teddy doesn't remember much of the experience but recalls the energy and efficiency in the ER, likening it to a hive of bees or a well-oiled military operation.

"I was raised in the military, and you have your chain of command. Everybody's doing their thing, even people that you don't think of," he said. "Nobody thinks of the cook or the driver, but it all takes a team, and I found that here. I felt at ease, even though I was having trouble. I thought, 'Wow, they know what they're doing.' That makes you feel so trusting because your life is in their hands. What they do is going to affect my life. I was in good hands."

Over time, Teddy regained use of his legs. His ability to write and speak soon returned, though he occasionally struggles to get the words out.

"They said it's going to take a good year or so before he's ready or complete," Rita said. "But if he's just like he is now, we're satisfied."

Teddy agreed. "I tell everybody now, if you're having a stroke or think you're having a stroke, go in now. Not later. I don't care where they go, what hospital, go immediately if they have a problem because hospital people are there to help."

"I am just so happy that I got the crew that I got. I'm so happy that I got the hospital that I got. I really am. My family and Rita and I thank this hospital for all the good they've done me. Out of the way exceptional. And we wish to thank them. Thank you, doctor. Thank you, crew."

Quality and consistency:

core physicians strengthen emergency department

The Tri-County Health Care emergency department (ED) is now fully staffed by TCHC's own physicians, establishing a more streamlined continuity of care for patients and fostering deeper relationships between providers throughout TCHC.

"I think from an ER stand point, if you look at a huge majority of emergency rooms around here, there's a lot of temporary physicians, a lot of people coming in and out, and that's what we've had in the past," said Rachel Redig, M.D., emergency department physician. "So to have this core group of physicians who can all talk to each other and work together to serve this community offers a lot that most places around here don't have."

Establishing a continuity of care

The recent addition of Nate Ronning, M.D., has brought the number of TCHC ED physicians to five and has reduced the need for visiting physicians to little to none.

"Our own doctors will now be covering on the weekends," said Chris Harff, vice president of patient care services. "We knew this is what patients wanted and that this is what's right for patients."

Being full time allows the physicians to learn how one another and the team as a whole operate. They also form relationships with the family practice providers and across departments, with access to patient records to keep the line of communication open between the ED and a patient's primary provider.

Specifically, the ED now has a close relationship with orthopedic surgeon Ben Robertson, M.D., when it comes to moderate orthopedic injuries or fractures.

"We have something that a lot of places don't have right now. It's huge for a small town to have a fully staffed core group of ER physicians who are well-equipped to care for everything from an ankle sprain to a heart attack."

Rachel Redig, M.D.

This close collaboration means these patients can often receive their care locally.

"I think that a lot of it is being able to communicate and have a much better foundation for emergency care, along with the follow up," Redig said. "The family doctors know us. We know them. We're able to make sure we're doing the best for our patients."

"This should hopefully improve our patient flow through the department, better quality of care and more consistency," added Matt Cary, emergency department manager. "Hopefully you don't get to know those doctors by frequenting the ED, but if you do come in more than once, you may see the same doctor."

Enhanced by expert care

Ronning and Redig are specifically board certified in emergency medicine, while the other physicians, Dennis Faith, M.D.; Amadin Osayomore, M.D.; and Ryan Scott, D.O., have extensive emergency and urgent care experience.

In addition to these skilled physicians, the ED has support from specially trained emergency care nurses, paramedics, EMTs, pharmacists and more.

"In a place like an emergency room when there truly is an emergency, you have to be able to anticipate everyone's moves two steps ahead," Redig said. "Now that we've got a solid group, that teamwork is much more defined and runs like a well-oiled machine."

TCHC's ED is designated as a CALS hospital, which stands for comprehensive advanced life support.

"CALS is a rural community group approach," Cary said. "Basically, it's a team-building class between doctors, nurses, paramedics and EMTs. They all work together to learn how to take care of really sick or injured patients together."

TCHC is also designated as a Level IV Trauma Center, meaning it has met the Department of Health criteria for treating trauma patients or stabilizing them for transportation to a higher level of care.

"We have five full-time ED docs, a highly trained nursing staff, and if something bad happens to you, we're a good spot to come to," Cary said.



Rachel Redig, M.D.



Nate Ronning, M.D.



Dennis Faith, M.D.



Amadin Osayomore, M.D.



Ryan Scott, D.O.

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



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 **Tri-County Health Care**

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Welcome New Providers

Tri-County Health Care is privileged to offer you and your family complete, compassionate care close to home and is proud to introduce the following new providers who are currently, or will soon be, seeing patients in our rural health clinics. For more information on these and all of our talented, caring providers, check out their full profiles at TCHC.org.

all heart

Caring for you isn't just our purpose. It's our privilege.

Ross Anderson, M.D.

Obstetrics/Gynecology Physician
Wadena Clinic



Alfredmy Chessor, M.D.

Family Medicine Physician
Coming Soon to the Wadena Clinic



Dawn Sugg, FNP

Family Nurse Practitioner
Sebekla Clinic



Sada Aschnewitz, FNP

Family Nurse Practitioner
Coming Soon to the Wadena Clinic



Ashley Schultz, PA-C

Physician Assistant
Coming Soon to the Wadena Clinic

