

WINTER 2026

HEALTHYTIMES



WOLVERINES

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“The care we provide and the work we do every day provide substantial community benefit.”

JOEL BEISWENGER



Our commitment to the community

Joel Beiswenger, President and CEO

As we step into a new year, I am reminded of the vital role rural hospitals play in shaping the health and strength of our communities. Here at Astera Health, we see every day how access to quality, compassionate care close to home makes a difference — not just in healing, but in the very fabric of community life.

Rural hospitals like ours are more than healthcare providers; we are community anchors. We deliver more than 150 babies each year, who grow up to attend our local schools. We care for more than 16,000 family members through every stage of life in our region. We support neighbors in times of need and celebrate with them in times of recovery. In doing so, we help sustain the economic vitality, safety, and well-being of the region we serve through the nearly 500 people we employ.

Yet, the challenges facing rural healthcare are real. Limited resources and financial pressures require innovation and resilience. At Astera Health, we continue to adapt and evolve — investing in advanced technologies, expanding access to specialized care, and nurturing partnerships that strengthen our ability to serve. The Astera Health/CentraCare Coborn Cancer Center is the most recent example of this type of innovation. Most importantly, we are committed to our mission and vision of improving health and partnering for life by providing exceptional care right here. The care we provide and the work we do every day provide substantial community benefit. Each year, we report those benefits as a part of maintaining our not-for-profit status.

Here's a snapshot of what that was in 2024:

COMMUNITY BENEFITS – 2024

Financial Assistance	\$4,393,046
Community Health Improvement Services	\$53,867
Health Professions Education	\$121,117
Subsidized Health Services	\$6,629,768
Cash and In-Kind Contributions	\$116,029
Total Community Benefits	\$11,313,827



Don Jurgens, MD, Hilary Ufearo, MBBS, Jamie Udy, APRN, FNP, Abigail Luke, MD, Megan Hodges, MD, Kadir Mullings, MBBS, Christopher Miller, MD, PhD

Welcome New Providers

Please join us in welcoming our newest providers to Astera Health. We're grateful they've chosen to bring their skills and compassion to our patients and communities. We look forward to the positive impact they will make across our organization.



Madi Christiansen,
LICSW



Mary Janke, PA-C,
Orthopedics

In this issue, you will find information about some of those important things we do, like rehabilitation services and helping people like Arynn get back on her feet after an injury. We conducted a community health needs assessment to help us prioritize our focus to help improve community health. We recap the events we held in 2025, like our first-ever Jingle and Mingle, and give a sneak peek of our 2026 events.

As we celebrate more than a century of service to this community, I want to thank you — our patients, families, staff, and supporters — for your trust and partnership. Your belief in the importance of local healthcare fuels our purpose and ensures that rural hospitals like Astera Health will continue to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for trusting us with your care. We wish you a happy and healthy 2026!



Celebrating Community, Compassion, and Care: Astera Health Events

2025 has been a milestone year for Astera Health, as we celebrated our 100th anniversary while continuing to grow our commitment to improving the health and well-being of our community. Through a series of events, we connected with patients, families, donors, and community partners — the people who make our mission possible.

Honoring 100 Years of Care

In January, we kicked off our centennial year with a community celebration at the Astera Health Campus. The event brought together generations of patients, providers, and staff to reflect on a century of compassionate care and innovation. We participated in many local parades, hosted blood drives, hosted an employee picnic for them and their families to thank them for their service, and for the first time, hosted a free holiday celebration to spread cheer during our Jingle and Mingle event in November.

Promoting Wellness and Connection

Throughout the year, we hosted our Bite Size Conversations each month, providing health education to our community and free to all who attend. From learning about hypertension (high blood pressure), the role of the community paramedic, tick-borne illnesses, advance directives, to Medicare wellness visits and diabetes education, hundreds of community members are learning ways to be healthy and live longer. We introduced a new event called Lobby Learning, where we display educational information each month with our first one being about ways to prevent falls in your home.

Giving Back Through the Astera Health Foundation

The Astera Health Foundation played a vital role in bringing people together for a cause. The Golf Classic, Ambulance Pull at June Jubilee, Brunch at Tiffany's, Pink Flannel and Fizz, and Gemini Circle donor events raised crucial funds to enhance patient care and support for our new cancer center, which opened in July of 2025. These events also gave us an opportunity to thank our generous donors and volunteers who continue to make a lasting difference.

Building the Future of Healthcare

Every event, big or small, is rooted in our mission — to care for our community with excellence and empathy. They're not just celebrations or fundraisers; they're moments to connect, inspire, and invest in the future of local healthcare. Whether it's supporting families with a new childcare facility, expanding services, or fostering partnerships, our events reflect Astera Health's unwavering dedication to the people we serve.



Save the Date for 2026 Events

Bite Size Conversations are held on the third Monday of the month.

JANUARY: 5-9 Lobby Learning: Winter Safety

JULY: 13-17 Lobby Learning: Healthy Aging and Brain Health

FEBRUARY: 9-13 Lobby Learning: Heart Health

AUGUST: 10-14 Lobby Learning: TBD

MARCH: 9-13 Lobby Learning: Nutrition Awareness

SEPTEMBER: 12 Foundation Denim and Dueling Pianos Fundraiser / 21-25 Lobby Learning: Fall Prevention

APRIL: 8 Blood Drive / 13-17 Lobby Learning: Medication Safety

OCTOBER: 2 Pink Flannel and Fizz / 5-9 Lobby Learning: Emergency Preparedness

MAY: 10-16 National Hospital Week / 11-15 Lobby Learning: Stroke Awareness and Prevention / 12 Volunteer Appreciation Event / 29 Foundation Golf Classic

NOVEMBER: 9-13 Lobby Learning: TBD / 19 Jingle and Mingle

JUNE: 8-12 Lobby Learning: Heat Safety

DECEMBER: 14-18 Lobby Learning: TBD



Arynn Lorentz is a senior athlete at Wadena-Deer Creek High School and a patient who benefited from Orthopedic and Rehabilitation services at Astera Health.

Recover, Rebuild, Reclaim

How Astera Health's Rehabilitation Services restore movement, function, and independence

When injury or illness interrupts life's rhythm, it's easy to feel like the body you once relied on is no longer the one showing up. At Astera Health, the journey back isn't one you take alone. With a full spectrum of rehabilitation services, the goal is not simply to survive but to thrive: to restore mobility, manage chronic illness, regain confidence, and reclaim the things you love.

Why rehabilitation matters

At Astera Health, rehabilitation begins with a conversation. What are your goals? What matters most? What's standing between you and returning to your life? From there, a customized plan is built — and evolves — as you progress.

Whether you're recovering from a joint replacement, coping with a chronic illness, suffering from an injury, or supporting a child through developmental challenges, rehab is a key bridge from medical treatment back to living your best life. There are common reasons people seek rehabilitation: amputation, arthritis, brain or spinal injury, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, joint replacement, stroke, incontinence, swallowing issues, and more.

Here's a closer look at the core offerings that make up Astera's rehabilitation program — and what they can mean for you.

Physical Therapy

When movement, strength or mobility has been lost, physical therapy is often the place to begin. Astera's physical therapists work with patients across the lifespan to restore function, improve strength, or slow the progression of disease.

Whether you're:

- **Regaining strength after surgery or injury**
- **Overcoming a sprain, strain, or joint replacement**
- **Battling mobility loss due to chronic disease**

... your physical therapist becomes your movement coach, guiding you from where you are now toward where you want to be.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy focuses on the tasks of life: those everyday actions and movements we often take for granted. After traumatic injury, stroke, or other health events, fine motor skills, range of motion, or ability to carry out daily living may be impaired. Occupational therapy restores independence in daily routines, work, and leisure.

Occupational therapy can also play an important role in helping people feel their best during and after cancer treatment. Cancer and its treatments can cause side effects such as fatigue, pain, swelling (lymphedema), or changes in strength and coordination — all of which can make daily activities more challenging.

Occupational therapists help rebuild the path back to people being able to care for themselves, working, enjoying hobbies, or spending time with family.

Speech Therapy

Speech and language difficulties can shake confidence and disrupt communication—not only in social or professional settings, but

“ My experience was excellent. The team was great. ”

ARYNN LORENTZ, PATIENT

within one's own mind. Speech-language therapists help patients of all ages with voice, clarity of speech, and swallowing issues (which may arise from infection, head injury, or nervous system disorders).

From more distinct pronunciation to regaining safe swallowing to returning to conversation, speech therapy opens doors to connection and quality of life.

Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Sometimes the challenge isn't a broken bone but a compromised heart or lungs. Astera Health provides specialized rehab services to patients recovering from heart attacks, heart surgery, or managing chronic lung disease.

In cardiac rehabilitation, exercise, education, and counseling help rebuild the cardiovascular system. In pulmonary rehabilitation, the focus turns to improved breathing, stamina, and everyday function. These programs help patients move beyond “just coping” toward living fully.

Aquatic Therapy

Water has a unique healing power. Aquatic therapy offers a lower-impact yet highly effective rehabilitation environment — where buoyancy reduces stress on joints, water resistance builds strength, and movement feels more accessible.

For many patients — especially those with arthritis, chronic pain, or limited mobility — this can be a game-changer. Moving freely in water can translate into better movement on land.

Sports Medicine

Athletes — and anyone who's active or aspires to be — deserve expert care. Astera's sports medicine team helps injured athletes recover, prevent future injury, and get back to top performance. Our highly qualified and multi-skilled athletic trainers get athletes back in the game. We even offer sports-related injury evaluation for athletes in elementary, middle, or high school. This free service is offered Monday through Friday, 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

Pediatric Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation isn't just for adults. Astera Health supports children and teens with developmental challenges, birth defects, brain or spinal injuries, or delays in speech and motor skills.

Our pediatric gym is a unique space in the region to help children:

- **build balance skills**
- **develop crawling or walking skills**
- **improve their gait**
- **learn how to use a wheelchair**
- **work on their ability to perform certain movements, such as jumping or skipping**

We empower families and young patients to step into their greatest potential.



Arynn Lorentz during a therapy session with Kendra Peeters, PT, DPT.

Arynn's Journey

Arynn Lorentz, a senior at Wadena-Deer Creek High School, was playing a game in phy ed when she suffered a major knee injury. An MRI showed that she tore the ligaments and meniscuses in her left knee. She started physical therapy the day after her MRI, about two days a week, to get some motion back and reduce swelling. Her injury was so severe that it required surgery with Dr. Ben Robertson, an orthopedic surgeon at Astera Health. Her recovery included eight months of physical therapy.

“My experience was excellent. The team was great. They explained everything clearly, helped me set goals for my recovery, and made sure I understood each step of the process. They answered all my questions and checked in on my progress, which made it a lot easier to stay on track and see results. Without Kendra Peeters and the physical therapy team and Dr. Robertson and the orthopedics team, I wouldn't be back doing the sports and activities I love with my friends.”

Arynn is fully recovered from her injury and playing tennis and softball, as well as being a member of the National Honor Society and Business Professionals of America, as a busy senior at WDCHS. She is ready for her next chapter at university and volunteering in South Africa this summer.

Taking the first step

If your life has been disrupted by injury or illness, know this: you don't have to walk the road alone. Talk to your primary care provider about any of these services to let Astera Health's rehabilitation team help you rediscover strength, mobility, and freedom.



CANCER SCREENING GUIDE BY AGE

Based on national guidelines and Astera Health recommendations

Regular checkups and screenings can help catch cancer early — when it's easiest to treat. Talk with your healthcare provider about what's right for you based on your personal and family history.

Ages 18–20

- » **Physical:** One full check-up
- » **Self-Checks:** Look over your skin monthly for new or changing spots
- » **Men:** Check testicles monthly

Ages 21–24

- » **Women:** Physical every 3 years; Pap test starting at 21; Monthly skin and breast checks
- » **Men:** Physical every 3 years; Monthly skin and testicular checks

Ages 25–39

- » **Women:** Physical every 3 years; HPV or Pap/HPV co-test every 3–5 years; Monthly skin and breast checks; Discuss mammograms if high-risk
- » **Men:** Physical every 3 years; Monthly skin and testicular checks

Ages 40–65

- » **Women:** Yearly physical; Mammogram every 1–2 years; HPV or co-test every 3–5 years (stop after 65 if normal); Colon screening starting at 45 (options include colonoscopy, stool DNA, or FIT test); Monthly skin check
- » **Men:** Yearly physical; Colon screening starting at 45; Discuss PSA test around 50; Monthly skin and testicular checks

Ages 55–74

- » **Continue breast/prostate and colon screenings** as recommended
- » **If current or former heavy smoker**, ask about low-dose CT scan for lung cancer
- » **Monthly** skin check

Ages 66+

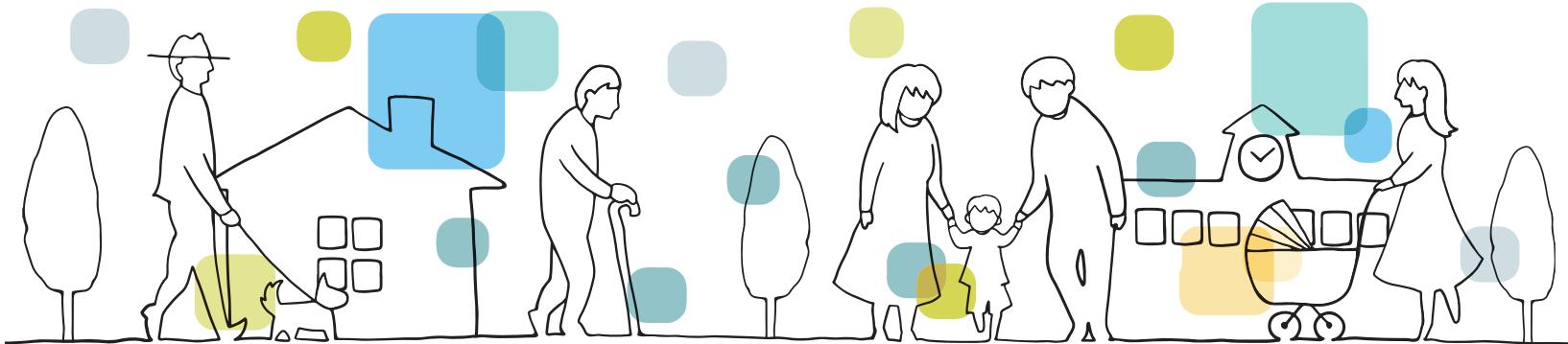
- » **Continue colon, mammogram, or prostate screenings** as advised by your provider
- » Stay up to date on **yearly physicals and Medicare Wellness visits** and **monthly skin checks**

Tips for Everyone

- » **Avoid tobacco and limit alcohol**
- » **Stay active and maintain a healthy weight**
- » **Eat more fruits, vegetables, and fiber**
- » **Use SPF 30+ sunscreen year-round**

Staying up to date on routine cancer screenings is an important part of protecting your long-term health. Scan the code to message your provider about which screenings you may be due for. They can guide you based on your age, personal history, and risk factors, helping you stay proactive and informed about your care.





2025 Community Health Needs Assessment

Astera Health has completed its 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to learn more about the health of people in Wadena, Todd, and Otter Tail counties. This report helps us understand what our community needs most and how we can work together to make everyone healthier.

We asked for input from local residents, community organizations, schools, law enforcement, and public health agencies. More than 1,800 people completed surveys and shared their thoughts. We also used data from public health reports, our internal data, and state and national health data to see where our communities are doing well and where help is needed.

From this information, three main health priorities were chosen for the next three years:

1. Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Many adults in our area have high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease and stroke. Astera Health will focus on education, screenings, and support for healthy habits.

2. Obesity

Our area has one of the highest obesity rates in the state. We'll continue programs that encourage physical activity, healthy eating, and regular checkups.

3. Substance Use Disorder

Drug and alcohol use are major community concerns. Astera Health will expand treatment options, prevention education, and community partnerships to support those affected.

Astera Health is working closely with public health departments, schools, and local organizations to address these needs. Other areas like mental health, access to care, and family safety will continue to receive support through community programs.

By working together, we can create a healthier future for everyone who calls this region home. Astera Health remains committed to improving the health and well-being of all people in our communities.

To read the full assessment and improvement plan, go to asterahealth.org/CHNA





Astera Health

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Upcoming Events *Mark your calendars!*

Lobby Learning: Winter Safety

January 5-9 at Astera Health Main Campus, Wadena

Bite Size Conversation: A Glimpse into Everyday Wellness

Monday, Jan. 19, Noon at Astera Health Main Campus, Wadena

Lobby Learning: Heart Health

February 9-13 at Astera Health Main Campus, Wadena

Bite Size Conversation: Blood Pressure Matters - Small Steps

Monday, Feb. 16, Noon at Cozy Theatre, Wadena

Bite Size Conversation: The Weight of Worry

Monday, Nov. 17, Noon at Astera Health Main Campus, Wadena

Lobby Learning: Nutrition Awareness

March 9-13 at Astera Health Main Campus, Wadena

Bite Size Conversation: Bottoms Up - Your Colon Health

Monday, March 16, Noon at Astera Health Main Campus, Wadena

Blood Drive

Wednesday, April 8, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Astera Health Main Campus, Wadena



For updates and additional events, visit: asterahealth.org/events