

# HEALTH BEAT

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTHY LIVING

SUMMER 2008



## CANCER WARRIOR

ONE WOMAN'S  
**INCREDIBLE**  
FIGHT PAGE 8

## THROUGH THE YEARS

HOW TO BE WELL IN YOUR 30S, 40S,  
50S, 60S, 70S AND BEYOND PAGE 6

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STORIES OF  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
SUPPORT

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*“the good life”*  
mean to a loved one?

*Their last days filled with dignity and compassion.*

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# Hope and Home



I see strength in the people of central and north central Kansas. We are hopeful about the future of our communities and are proud of where we live. A recent national study confirmed my impressions, noting how people in this region are willing to help their neighbors and encourage their youth to return here to live!

In the spirit of hope, hospital leaders in the Sunflower Health Network are working together to meet shared goals. Fifteen years ago, Salina Regional Health Center partnered with area hospitals to build this network. We team with 15 hospitals from Hillsboro and McPherson north to the Nebraska border and from Clay Center and Herington west to Osborne and Smith Center. While the region covers

over 10,000 square miles of rural Kansas, the hospital leaders of the network have a shared vision of delivering quality healthcare for the 165,000 people who make this region their home.

With this vision, we know we face challenges. Our population is aging. That means Medicare will increasingly be the main source of health care benefits. But the federal government has not reserved enough money to pay for all the benefits that have been promised to retirees. This greatly concerns rural hospitals and physicians. Also, the number of health care professionals available to fill positions in our organizations is less than we need. Information technologies and some other aspects of patient care are not standardized across the region, making it more difficult to provide smooth transitions of patients from one facility to another. And of course these health care challenges are all within a bigger picture of global environmental, social, and political issues about which we are all concerned.

Sunflower Health Network hospitals are together developing a new five-year strategic plan to address these challenges. We are emphasizing six priority areas:

- Availability of specialist physician care throughout the region
- Timeliness and safety of inter-community referrals and transfers
- Availability of quality nurses and other key professionals
- Patient care quality within each member hospital
- Capacity to share electronic patient care information
- Ability to deal with changes in Medicare reimbursement

We share these priorities with you so you will know area hospitals are working together for common good, converting hope into action. We are building healthcare for the next generation of people who will call central and north central Kansas ... home!

Charles Grimwood  
Vice President, Regional Development

## HEALTH BEAT

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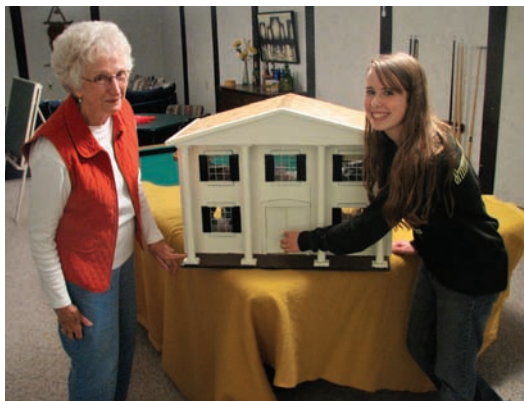
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Shirley Lang and Amy Kraus with the dollhouse given away as part of the Auxiliary's Holly Days festivities.

## TEEN RE-DONATES DOLLHOUSE TO AUXILIARY

Amy Kraus remembers being quite surprised when someone at church told her she was the new owner of a dollhouse.

"I didn't even know my name had been entered in the drawing," Kraus says of the fundraiser sponsored by the Foundation in 2001 to increase the size of the Rebecca A. Morrison House so more loved ones of patients at Salina Regional could be accommodated with a place to stay.

The dollhouse had been donated to the cause by Rev. Ken Parker and his father, David, who saw a remarkable similarity between it and the original Morrison House located on Eighth Street near the Santa Fe Campus.

This past holiday season Amy returned the dollhouse to the Salina Regional Service Auxiliary, a major supporter of the Morrison House, so that more funds could be raised. Chances were sold to win the house during the annual Holly Days festivities in December.

This time the winner was Shirley Lang, who was thrilled with the prize.

"I have two young granddaughters who are just going to love playing with this when they come over to my house," Lang says. "It was so nice of Amy to give it back to support the Auxiliary. She got her use out of it and passed it on so someone else could enjoy it."

# In the Bone Zone

Besides getting enough calcium in your diet, exercise is essential for building strong bones and helping prevent osteoporosis.

### GOOD

Flexibility exercises can help improve range of motion in your joints, which can help prevent injury.

### BETTER

Flexibility exercises, plus weight-bearing activities such as hiking, stair climbing and low-impact aerobics slow mineral loss in your bones.

### BEST

Flexibility and weight-bearing activities, plus strength-training exercises with weights can help build bone mass and strengthen your muscles to help avoid falls.



# COLLABORATIVE CLASS LEADS DIABETICS ON 'JOURNEY FOR CONTROL'

Salina Regional Health Center, COMCARE, PA, and Diabetes Consulting Services of Salina have joined forces to offer a new approach to educating patients and the public about diabetes. The class, called "Journey for Control," uses curriculum approved by the American Diabetes Association and is offered free of charge.

"We feel there shouldn't be any obstacles for people to receive the information they need to make the best decisions in their lives," says Marlene White, CDE, a diabetes educator at Salina Regional. "A collaborative effort between several organizations has made this possible."

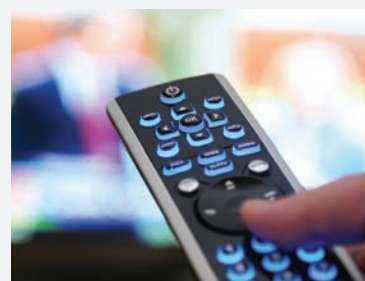
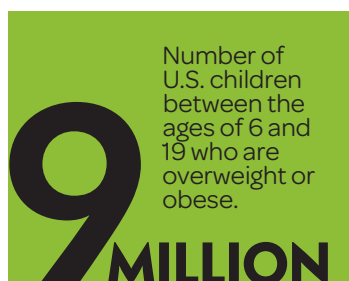
The course is taught by certified diabetes educators and a doctor of pharmacy. It covers topics ranging from healthy eating and monitoring blood sugars to preventing complications and usage of medications. The program is open to anyone, including newly diagnosed diabetics, those who've battled the disease for a long time and anyone who simply wants to learn more.

The program is held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. one day a week for four consecutive weeks at Salina Regional Health Center. The next course is scheduled to begin in September. Contact White by calling **785-452-7605** for more information. Pre-registration is requested.

## Remote Control for Weight

Why can one woman eat a slice of cake and remain stick thin, while another gains 3 pounds? The answer may lie in a part of the brain called the melanocortin system, according to researchers at the University of Cincinnati. It serves as a "remote control" for the way the body stores and metabolizes fat.

The study found that the system doesn't just respond to signals such as hunger or satiety as previously thought. It also controls



## WHAT DOES GRIEF FEEL LIKE?

Following the loss of a loved one, many feel empty and numb as if they are in shock. Some even notice physical changes such as trembling, nausea, muscle weakness and dry mouth or experience trouble breathing, sleeping and eating.

Feelings of deep sadness and sorrow are common in grief. Often, people find themselves thinking in ways that are unfamiliar and disturbing. Many people experience a kind of "spiritual crisis" following loss.

In general, grief makes room for thoughts, behaviors and feelings that might be considered abnormal or unusual at other times. Following significant loss, however, most of these components of grief are, in fact, quite normal.

If you've experienced the loss of a loved one, Hospice of Salina can help. Call **785-825-1717** to learn about upcoming free community support groups.



whether extra glucose will be converted to fat and whether the body will metabolize it or store it. This discovery could lead to a breakthrough in the treatment of genetically caused obesity in humans.

More than 30 percent of American adults are obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, putting them at risk for heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

## KNOW YOUR BMI

→ Are you at risk for weight-related conditions? Calculate your body mass index at [nhlbisupport.com/bmi](http://nhlbisupport.com/bmi). Talk to your doctor if it's higher than 24.9.



BY AMY LYNN SMITH  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
JEFF NEWTON

The choices  
you make  
today affect  
your health  
tomorrow.  
Learn how to  
stay healthy  
decade after  
decade

We all know too well that the choices we make today—even the seemingly minute ones—can have lasting effects on our lives tomorrow. Some choices are obvious: If I buy this pair of shoes today, it will end up on my credit card bill at the end of the month. Others are less so: If I smoke just one cigarette today, it could lead to a habit later on.

Like it or not, staying healthy for a lifetime takes effort. And what you do today can definitely affect your health tomorrow—for better or worse. The good news is that it's never too late to improve your lifestyle, and the sooner you start adopting good habits, the greater the positive impact will be down the road.

## BACK TO BASICS

Certain feel-good fundamentals should follow you through the decades, such as exercise. Most experts recommend at least 30 minutes a day, five or more days a week.

“Regular exercise is the most important preventive strategy for all of us,” says David Dale, M.D., an internist and president of the American College of Physicians.

Another key component to living well is eating a low-fat diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables. A sensible eating plan, along with exercise, can help you maintain a healthy weight, which is vital to good health.

These principles—combined with paying attention to your changing needs and building on good habits decade after decade—can help you stay healthy for years to come.

## THIRTIES

**Lifestyle.** The demands of work or family can create a “dine-and-dash” lifestyle, says Susan Moores, M.S., R.D., a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. “Plan ahead so you always have plenty of fruit, vegetables and healthy options to grab when you’re running out the door,” she suggests.

**Party hearty?** It may not be easy to kick the good-time bad habits from your 20s, but watch your alcohol intake. Experts recommend no more than one drink per day for women and two for men.

**Screenings.** Jim King, M.D., president of the American Academy of Family Physicians,

suggests having your cholesterol and blood sugar levels tested. If there's a family history of disease, your doctor may recommend that you begin certain screenings earlier, such as mammograms for women at high risk for breast cancer. Women: You should be having regular Pap tests.

**Vaccinations.** Get a tetanus booster shot every 10 years.

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**Vaccinations.** Get a tetanus booster shot every 10 years.

## FORTIES

**Lifestyle.** Because your metabolism is slowing, you may notice the pounds creeping on even if you're following a healthy diet and exercising. "You may need to start cutting back on splurges," Moores says. More exercise also might be required to maintain or lose weight.

**Staring down stress.** Your job may be more high-powered than ever, and exercise is one of the best ways to relieve stress. Take walks or a calming yoga class. Plus, yoga is considered a weight-bearing exercise, as are weight lifting and push-ups. Weight-bearing exercise can help decrease the accumulation of abdominal fat, which is linked to certain diseases, including diabetes and heart disease, and tends to occur as people age.

**Screenings.** Blood pressure checks should be routine now, along with annual eye exams. Women: Have your first mammogram at age 40 and continue them every one or two years as recommended by your doctor.

## FIFTIES

**Lifestyle.** Like many people at this age, you may need medication for conditions such as high blood pressure. "The idea of an annual checkup becomes more and more important at this point," Dale says.

**Achy breaky bones.** One out of two women will suffer a fracture because of poor bone strength after age 50, Moores says. You may need additional calcium, vitamin D and magnesium in your diet. Low-fat dairy products and certain fish, nuts and seeds can be good sources, but ask your doctor whether you need a supplement.

**Screenings.** Begin routine screenings for colorectal cancer and ask your doctor whether you should have a hearing test. Men: Start getting tested for prostate cancer.

**Vaccinations.** By age 50, get a flu shot every year.

## SIXTIES

**Lifestyle.** "If you ever made the bad choice to become a smoker, this is when you begin to see the acceleration of all aspects of aging," Dale says. "Sixty-year-old people who smoke often have the bodies of 70- or 80-year-olds." But quitting now still can help protect your health and longevity.

**What's this medicine for?** Chances are you're taking one or more medications. Rely on your doctor and pharmacist to help you understand these medicines, their benefits and potential side effects. Know what you can do to manage a chronic condition.

**Screenings.** Women: Start being tested regularly for osteoporosis.

**Vaccinations.** Get a pneumonia vaccine around age 65. After 60, you may want to ask your doctor if you should get the shingles vaccine.

## SEVENTIES AND BEYOND

**Lifestyle.** You may have a combination of health issues at this point, so don't skip any visits to the doctor. Although plenty of 70-year-olds still run marathons, you may want to try less vigorous exercise, such as walking, stationary biking or swimming. "The key is to get your heart rate up, which all these activities will do," King says.

**Appetite for life.** You may notice changes in your digestive system, or that medication affects your appetite or the way food tastes. Your appetite may be diminished, which makes packing as much nutrition as possible into whatever you eat particularly important, Moores says.

**Screenings.** Women: Your doctor may say you can quit having Pap tests, especially if you've had a hysterectomy. ❏

## A HEALTHY OUTLOOK

Many people experience chronic stress, which can lead to conditions such as decreased immune function or heart disease. Depression is also more common than you might think, and the symptoms can vary based on your age, says Jim King, M.D., president of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

"When a younger person is depressed, symptoms may include feeling sad or a loss of pleasure," he explains. "In an older person, it may manifest in increased

confusion or a general sense of not feeling well."

Confusion also could be a sign of cognitive decline or possibly Alzheimer's disease.

Experts have known for years that exercise relieves stress, and recent studies have shown that it can also prevent depression and Alzheimer's disease.

### For Better or Worse

To help ensure good health through the ages, develop a relationship with a primary care physician. A doctor who is familiar with your personal and family history can recommend appropriate screenings and vaccinations. To find a physician, visit [familydoctor.org](http://familydoctor.org) and click "Find a Doctor."

# COMPLETE CANCER CARE

BY JOHN BERGGREN

## Three days before Christmas

2006 Anita Huntley found an unmistakable lump on her breast. She immediately sought a mammogram, which confirmed the presence of an abnormality. A biopsy would soon confirm ductal cell carcinoma.

Nothing can prepare you for cancer. Huntley, now age 48, was a picture of health. She walked three to five miles every day. She enjoyed yoga, ate right, received regular mammograms and had no known family history of the disease. Breast cancer didn't seem to fit in the realm of possibility.

"It was incredibly scary," Huntley recalls. "It always felt like something that would happen to someone else."

One woman's holiday discovery leads to prompt and life-saving treatment

*Anita Huntley walks three to five miles a day and lives a healthy lifestyle. She never imagined she might one day face breast cancer.*

Huntley underwent a lumpectomy to surgically remove the tumor and began receiving chemotherapy early in 2007 coupled with a more targeted cancer drug treatment. The chemo made her hair fall out and caused minor fatigue, but she kept working as a physician assistant seeing rehab patients in Salina. Her oncologist eventually referred her for radiation treatment.

## PRECISION RADIATION TREATMENT

Huntley remembers being quite apprehensive about beginning radiation. She considered going to a larger community for care, before a friend who is a sales representative for radiation treatment equipment informed her that Salina had the latest technology available at the Tammy Walker Cancer Center.

"When you're treating such a small area that is so close to your heart and other major organs you worry that something could go wrong," Huntley says. "I assumed, since I have fair skin that I would be a mass of blisters. But, it was all very tolerable. Soon I was almost half way through my daily appointments when I realized that radiation was the easiest part of my treatment."

The Tammy Walker Cancer Center utilizes Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy, which can deliver precision amounts of

*Tammy Walker Cancer Center*



# ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Many patients and their loved ones find comfort in learning how others are coping with cancer. For this reason the Tammy Walker Cancer Center offers a number of free monthly support groups for patients and non-patients to take part in.

Support groups include:

- + Breast cancer support
- + “Man to Man” – prostate cancer support
- + “Survivors and Friends” – general cancer support

Call Pam Ehltz with the Tammy Walker Cancer Center at **785-452-7037** to learn the upcoming schedule for cancer support groups.

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Call the Tammy Walker Cancer Center at **785-452-4850** to learn more about the wide range of services available.



treatment to conform with the three-dimensional shape of a tumor.

“Years ago different types of radiation were given and often treatment was continued until patients had adverse reactions,” says Becky Troyer, RTT, the radiation oncology director at the Cancer Center. “Today radiation is individualized to meet each patient’s needs and we pay a great deal of attention to managing the side effects. Most patients only experience minor side effects.”

### A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

A cancer diagnosis holds such gravity that many might think that a cancer center is the last

place where you would want to go to have your spirits lifted. But, Huntley found the exact opposite to be true.

“I remember the staff and I talked a lot about being warriors,” says Huntley, who completed radiation treatment in October 2007. “When you undergo radiation you have markings and tattoos on your body that help ensure you are precisely positioned for each treatment. The markings make you feel like a warrior, but I thank God for the support the staff gave me. They gave me real energy to go through this—it didn’t come from me. It came from the staff.”

Patients are also encouraged to call whenever they have questions or even the slightest concerns.

“We have a wonderful staff and it’s an understood policy we have with patients that they can call anytime—even in the middle of the night,” Troyer says. “Everyone here can easily put themselves in the patients’ shoes and we make ourselves available to them every step of the way.”

### TOTAL CARE

There is much more to successful cancer treatment than chemo and radiation. Patients deal with a wide range of issues including loss of appetite, strength and confidence in appearance. Many also have spiritual and social needs.

The Tammy Walker Cancer Center offers services to assist patients in all of these situations as well.

Huntley consulted a physical therapist and dietitian during her treatment, utilized the appearance center to learn how to wear a wig, and a social worker introduced her to a monthly breast cancer support group sponsored by the Cancer Center.

“The physical therapist and dietitian gave me so much information from a perspective that I hadn’t considered before,” Huntley says. “I was introduced to people in all different stages of treatment, and the patients really do find strength in each other.

“Through it all I came to learn that you can’t fight the treatment, the treatment is helping you fight the cancer. You have to focus on fighting the cancer. It all goes back to that warrior attitude.”

## COORDINATED CARE

Tammy Walker Cancer Center patients find state-of-the-art technology and care in a comforting and healing environment. All patients have access to a care coordinator who assists physicians by closely following each individual’s care and ensures patients understand each step of the treatment and recovery process.

### Comprehensive services include:

- Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy
- Image-guided radiotherapy
- 3-D conformal treatment planning
- Medical oncology
- Access to national clinical trials
- Nutrition counseling
- Spiritual support
- Appearance center
- Transportation
- Cancer library
- Physical therapy
- American Cancer Society programming
- Cancer outreach and education





# NICU Keeps Families Close to Home

**F**ew events in life create the level of excitement and anticipation parents experience when preparing for the arrival of a new baby. Parents commonly begin preparing weeks in advance to make sure the home nursery is stocked with the supplies they'll need. They gather necessities for a hospital stay and work to get as many of their affairs in order as possible.

But no amount of preparation or planning readies parents for a premature birth or newborn complications that can arise. Newborns, especially those that are premature, might not survive without advanced care for many issues like respiratory distress, feeding problems or the ability to maintain an appropriate body temperature.

That can extend hospital stays from a planned short couple days to exhausting weeks on end. "As a parent you go through just about every emotion there is," says Tia Burnett, whose youngest two of five children had extended stays at Salina Regional's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). "You blame yourself. You feel all the ups and downs that go along with your child's condition. I remember feeling like I was floating, trying to work and take care of my other children. It's all just a blur."

## 'ANGELS' TO THE RESCUE

Tia's son Jicory Wilson was born eight weeks early and had a rough delivery. He experienced a brain bleed and needed assistance breathing. Doctors also diagnosed a heart murmur and he required a blood transfusion to stabilize his condition. In all, Jicory spent 23 days in Salina Regional's NICU and Tia developed a high level of trust and friendship with many of the hospital's staff members.

"Everyone was so into his wellbeing," Tia says. "I swear they never took an eye off of him. Those women are angels, so supportive and very smart. I never questioned them. My doctor gave me the option of transferring to Wichita, but I felt so confident in his care and that of the nurses that I never really felt it was necessary."

Tia's fifth child, Jha'lii Wilson was born last summer five weeks early. She had trouble feeding and tired easily when trying to take a bottle. It took just over two weeks before Jha'lii was strong enough to handle all the feedings well enough to go home.



*Tia Burnett and Eligah Wilson's youngest two children, Jicory and Jha'lii, both had extended stays in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.*



*A nurse evaluates a newborn at Salina Regional.*

"With four children at home I couldn't stay with her all the time," Tia says. "When I couldn't be there I'd call every two hours, even through the night, to see how she was doing and they were so attentive to our needs."

## KEEPING FAMILIES CLOSE TO HOME

Nationwide, the March of Dimes estimates that one in eight births are preterm or occur before the 37th week of pregnancy. Although those aren't large percentages, babies that are born full term sometimes also require advanced care.

"In a town like Salina where we have such strong obstetrical care you have to have an ability to care for newborns experiencing complications," says Alisa Bridge, M.D., a Salina pediatrician. "We wouldn't be able to



deliver nearly as many high-risk patients without a NICU here and it decreases the stress on the families when they can stay close to home.”

In severe circumstances, like the births of Jicory and Jha’lii, spending weeks in the hospital is commonplace. Many parents don’t enjoy enough flexibility in their jobs to miss extended amounts of time at work. And travel to a larger city like Kansas City or Wichita often takes young families away from their support networks of grandparents, friends, co-workers and church groups.

“In instances where we’ve had to transfer patients to Wichita and they’ve been transferred back to Salina to receive additional inpatient care after their condition has stabilized, we’ve had many families remark how grateful they are for the service,” Bridge says. “It makes a big difference for families who can be home with loved ones and then spend part of the day in the NICU with their newborn.”

## A SUBSIDIZED HOSPITAL SERVICE

Although some services within Salina Regional’s Family Birthing Center are profitable, the service line as a whole creates a negative impact on the organization’s bottom line. Government-sponsored insurance and many third-party insurers reimburse the hospital for services by diagnosis and not the level or length of care needed to treat a condition.

In 2007, 232 newborns were cared for in the NICU for a total of 1,193 patient days. Nursery services as a whole resulted in a net loss of \$377,628, and the majority of that loss is a product of advanced NICU care.

“For a city like Salina to have the NICU services it has is a huge benefit to the community,” Bridge says. “Parents seem to develop a real bond with the staff and that makes it a home-like family atmosphere. We have several families that send us Christmas cards every year with updates on their little ones because there is such a bond here.”

# REGIONAL HEALTH INITIATIVES AND DEVELOPMENT

Salina Regional takes an active role in providing leadership for regional health initiatives and community development. The hospital provides support for health improvement initiatives such as the Alliance for a Healthy Community, Kansas Cancer Plan and the Salina Area United Way.

Many employees from Salina Regional volunteer to give health talks to community groups, participate in school-to-career events, and are involved in regional economic development efforts.

The hospital is a leader in disaster preparedness. Staff conduct in-house disaster drills twice annually and participate in regional drills each year.

“After area disasters like the Greensburg tornado, Coffeyville flooding and to a lesser extent the flooding in and around Salina in the past year, I think many recognize the importance of being prepared for when a disaster might strike,” says Sue Cooper, north central Kansas hospital disaster preparedness coordinator. “It’s not something we ever hope to have to face, but in the event that a disaster would occur we need to be prepared to execute the plans we have in place.”



## SUBSIDIZED HEALTH SERVICES AND DISCOUNTS

As a not-for-profit community hospital, Salina Regional provides a number of services that meet community needs, despite the fact that they have a negative impact on the organization’s bottom line.

For example, Salina Regional is one of the few area providers for behavioral health services. Psychiatrists on staff take calls for a wide region, including north central and much of the northwestern part of Kansas. Patients experiencing depression, schizophrenia, suicidal thoughts and sudden onset of a wide range of mental disorders are brought to Salina for care.

Oftentimes these patients have no insurance, or the insurance they do have doesn’t offer very good mental health coverage.

“Statistically one in five Americans will be touched by mental health disorders and two in three families will deal with crisis,” says Sally Leger-Schneider, Salina Regional’s behavioral health director. “We never turn anyone away based on whether or not we will get paid.”

Other services that are not profitable, but fulfill a need in the community, include neonatal intensive care, sexual assault care, infant/child development and certain other outpatient services. The hospital also offers patients who self-pay for their services a 10 percent discount. In 2007, more than \$5.4 million was provided in subsidized health services and discounts.





# Community Health Education and Outreach



The greatest weapons against disease are prevention and early detection. That's why Salina Regional goes to extensive efforts to offer education and health screenings in the community.

Salina Regional's cancer outreach programming includes community screening and educational forums for leading forms of the disease including skin, breast, colon and prostate cancer. Those that have been touched by cancer also have access to numerous support groups that meet on a monthly basis. An appearance center also helps victims who have been impacted by the side effects of treatment gain the self-confidence it takes to fight the disease and continue to be active in the community.

In the spring of 2007 Salina Regional was a major sponsor for a community-wide health fair and offered screening for sleep disorders, vascular health, cholesterol, blood pressure and risk of falling. A wide variety of educational information was also provided on topics ranging from diabetes and mental health to newborn care.

Salina Regional also operates a transportation service so that patients from in and around Salina can attend their appointments. In 2007, the hospital provided 5,436 rides.

In all, \$375,666 was invested in community health education and outreach efforts for the region.



## HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION

Salina Regional Health Center provides a clinical setting for the education of nursing, respiratory care, radiology, physical therapy and medical students. The hospital is also a clinical training site for physicians specializing in family medicine at the Smoky Hill Family Medicine Residency Program.

The residency's mission is to train doctors for rural medicine in Kansas. At Salina Regional they gain a wide range of experience following volunteer faculty from many specialties including obstetrics, pediatrics, general surgery, critical care and emergency care.

"The hospital's support and the presence of volunteer faculty in the community is critical to us," says Clint Colberg, chief resident at Smoky Hill. "This is an excellent place to train for rural medicine in Kansas, which is where most of us who come through this program aspire to practice once our training is complete."





## DONATIONS

Each year Salina Regional tithes a portion of its operating margin to the Salina Regional Health Foundation's Community Health Investment Program (CHIP). The Foundation in turn offers grants to a wide range of initiatives that impact community health.

In 2007, Salina Regional tithed 10 percent of its operating margin to CHIP, which awarded 17 grants for a total of \$419,435. Major gifts included \$120,000 offered as a community challenge grant to the American Red Cross for a new facility in Salina, a \$50,000 grant to the Greater Salina Community Foundation to address youth development needs, and a \$50,000 grant to the Ottawa County Health Planning Commission to purchase equipment for a future dental clinic in Minneapolis.

One grant helped Salina Public Schools purchase nebulizers and pulse oximeters to treat students experiencing respiratory problems at school. School district officials estimate that as many as 20 percent of the student population show signs of respiratory problems and require care. A standing order from a local pediatrician and procedure is in place to administer medicines as needed, in hopes of averting the need to call an ambulance for assistance.

"Most of the feedback I get from parents is how wonderful it is to have these machines in school, otherwise they would have to take off work to come and give a breathing treatment," says Mary Erker, R.N., school nurse at Coronado Elementary. "I use the oximeters on students who are complaining of shortness of breath and on asthmatics that have the same complaints. I love having the oximeter as an added tool to assess the students."

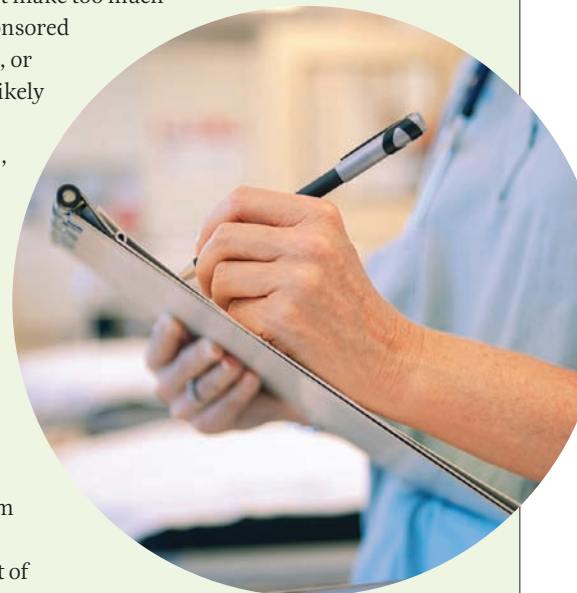
"I CAN NEVER THANK YOU ALL ENOUGH FOR THE HELP WITH MY HOSPITAL BILLS. WHEN I OPENED THE LETTER ALL I COULD DO WAS CRY. THANK YOU SO MUCH! GOD BLESS!"—  
CHARITY CARE RECIPIENT

## Charity Care

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that more than 300,000 Kansans or about 12 percent of the population is uninsured. Many cannot afford the high cost of private health insurance, but make too much money to be eligible for government-sponsored programs. Those that are self-employed, or employed by a small business, are least likely to have access to insurance.

When unexpected health issues arise, the costs associated with treatment can sometimes be simply unmanageable for those already struggling to make ends meet. In these instances patients can apply for assistance from Salina Regional to have the cost of their care reduced and in some cases completely eliminated. The hospital uses national poverty levels as a guideline for acceptance into its charity care program.

In 2007, 2,779 patients benefited from reduced or free care as a result of Salina Regional's charity care program at a cost of \$1.88 million.





# A Safety Net for the Uninsured

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans it wiped out Joseph Hill's home, neighborhood and entire lifestyle. So, when a friend in Salina offered Joseph and his wife a place to stay and a new start in life, it looked like the best option available to them.

The couple found employment locally, but soon Joseph's knees began giving him trouble and he couldn't keep working. His knees were the least of his health problems however. Joseph's unregulated diabetes was taking a huge toll.

Without a job or insurance, Joseph turned to the Salina Family Healthcare Center, Salina's Federally Qualified Community Health Center. The clinic charges patients who are economically disadvantaged on a sliding scale and offers assistance to those who have no health insurance.

"Without them I wouldn't have been able to get the care I needed," Joseph says. "I've gotten better care here than I ever did in New Orleans. We've gotten my diabetes under control and now we're looking at options for my knees."

Patients that meet certain guidelines of the clinic's financial screening process are then also automatically eligible for free services at Salina Regional Health Center. These services include inpatient and outpatient care and laboratory and diagnostic imaging services.

More than 1,500 patients at the clinic are eligible for free services at Salina Regional. In 2007, the hospital wrote off costs for \$894,604 to Salina Family Healthcare Center patients and nearly an additional \$1 million to others who qualified for free or reduced charges in accordance with the hospital's charity care policy. The hospital's criteria for giving services at free or reduced fees use national poverty levels as a guideline for acceptance.

"We provide high-quality primary care, and the hospital offers free services to economically disadvantaged patients in hopes that



*Joseph Hill, a patient at the Salina Family Healthcare Center, qualified to receive free lab work at Salina Regional.*

we can decrease emergency room utilization and hospitalization rates, which can be so costly," says Robert Freelove, M.D., chief medical officer for the Salina Family Healthcare Center. "The uninsured population is growing, and it's nice for our patients to not have to go through a separate screening process at the hospital to receive the care that they need."

More than 90 percent of Salina's specialty physicians also write off charges for uninsured patients at the Salina Family Healthcare Center.

"Not many communities have what we have in place for the uninsured," Freelove says. "Salina is very unique and it's something the medical community should be very proud of."

The patients who benefit from these services are genuinely grateful.

"I hope Salina will continue to offer these services," Joseph says. "For people who don't work or have insurance there aren't many places you can turn to."

## MEDICARE & MEDICAID SHORTFALLS

In most cases government-sponsored health insurance does not cover a hospital's cost to provide care for the services patients need. These "shortfalls" in coverage are absorbed by hospitals nationwide.

In 2007, 57 percent of Salina Regional's services were provided to patients with Medicare or Medicaid coverage. All patients are given access to the latest technology and treatment options available to ensure the best chances for survival—no matter what their method of payment is.



# CNA Classes Offered Free of Charge in Lindsborg

Nursing shortages abound across the country, but a donation from a local organization that wishes to remain anonymous is helping to ease the trend in McPherson County.

One member of the organization was so impressed with care received from nurse assistants during a hospital stay that they initiated a free program seven years ago where interested individuals could receive training to become Certified Nursing Assistants.

This summer Lindsborg Community Hospital and Bethany Home are the host sites for the course, which is offered through Hutchinson Community College. Forty-eight participants have been accepted into the 14-day program.

"We are so grateful to have been chosen to continue to partner with this charitable organization," says Larry VanDerWege, CEO of Lindsborg Community Hospital.

There are no strings attached to the program and no pressure made to work for a particular facility. Course costs are completely underwritten by the anonymous organization.

The program is an excellent opportunity for those interested in beginning a career in healthcare. Contact Lindsborg Community Hospital by calling **785-227-3308** for more information and to be notified of next summer's course availability.



*Tyce Young, director of nursing at Clay County Medical Center, evaluates a patient during one of the hospital's Teddy Bear Clinics.*

## TEDDY BEAR CLINIC EASES CHILDREN'S ANXIETY

Going to an emergency room or even the doctor's office can be a frightening experience for many children. But Clay County kids are learning that doctors and nurses aren't all that bad after all.

Clay County Medical Center offers a free Teddy Bear Clinic for groups of children ranging from day cares through third-grade classes. The children bring their favorite bear or stuffed animal to have hospital staff examine and get to the bottom of what's ailing them.

While the stuffed animals are the primary patients, the children can be weighed, measured and have their blood pressure taken. Teddy bears that need extra care can also be sutured, bandaged or splinted.

"It's a great way to show the children that when they go to the hospital or doctor's office the nurses and doctors are only trying to help them," says Marcia Newell, director of Foundation and Marketing at CCMC. "Our staff members enjoy these visits as much as the kids do."

What does  
“the good  
life”  
mean to me?



## *A healthy body and a healthy mind.*

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