Everything seems to take on added meaning during the holiday season. The tagline that NVRH adopted “We Treat You Like Family” is no different, especially for the numerous departments that sponsor families in the area during the holidays. The practice of helping families and individuals in need throughout the year is a long and healthy tradition here in the hospital, as evidenced by the numerous dress-down days and other fundraisers that are held. But that kind of philanthropy seems to take on a life of its own during the holidays as departments independently do what they can to assure that our friends and neighbors have a happy and healthy holiday whatever their current situation may be.

The Care Management team, which pitches in numerous times during the year with helping to keep the local food shelf stocked took on a new project this year. On December 14, they sponsored a dress-down day here that, instead of the traditional donation of money, was a donation of a gift for the Santa Fund, the program run by the St. Johnsbury Fire Department that provides toys for children in the St. J area.

The Birth center, through contacts at Project HOPE (Helping Other People Everyday, the non-profit in Lyndonville that runs a thrift store to fund their assistance projects that includes a food shelf), purchased gifts for a family in need.

The area north of Lyndonville has been assisted for many years by a group of volunteers known as Hand-to-Hand. Another non-profit, they receive names of families that could use help for the holidays and they organize volunteers from the community to provide gifts and a meal. This year approximately 43 families and 18 elderly persons were helped. With assistance from several local businesses, they were able to provide a turkey for each family, as well as boots and other winter gear for children and adults. They are also able to provide help with a fuel assistance program. Here in the hospital, several departments sponsored families. The Medical/Surgical, Day Surgery, Diagnostic Imaging and the
Laboratory have all been part of the Hand-to Hand-project for several years. Everyone contacted from these departments spoke of how much fun it is to take part in something tangible to assure that children will have a happy holiday. New in the last couple of years is the inclusion of sponsoring the elderly, since they sometimes get overlooked. Medical/Surgical and Day Surgery both spoke of how much enjoyment they get from giving to the elderly.

Featured in last month’s BrightLook, but certainly worthy of being mentioned again is the second floor business office crew who worked all year to help the Vermont branch of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. By holding fundraisers each month, some just for their department (i.e. guessing the date for the arrival of new grandchildren) and some hospital-wide (various business sponsored raffles) the department was able to present a check for $2,885 to the program last month to grant wishes to children with life threatening medical conditions.

It is heartening and wonderful to see that so many employee groups are willing to take on the task of making sure the less fortunate among us have reason to be hopeful during this time of year. Our admiration and commendations go out to these and all the other individuals and groups from the NVRH family that help to spread the holiday cheer from our family to so many in our communities!

The Hand-to-Hand distribution center (also known as Santa’s Workshop) as volunteers prepare the donations for the various families and individuals.

This serious/happy crew at Community Connections produced a heavenly chocolate fest Open House on Friday, December 20th. They even had wonderful aprons created for the occasion! Known as the Community Connections Confection Team, they lived up to the name.

Volunteer Carol Fregosi “hats up” for the holidays along with her therapy dog, Maggie. Maggie will be 14 years old next year, and she’s been visiting patients at NVRH for 13 years.
Medical Records held a Holiday Open House on Wednesday, December 18th. They certainly are a welcoming and fun crew to visit—thanks!

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital’s Finance and Patient Account Departments (the second floor of the Business Center) recently presented a check for $2,885 to the Vermont Make-A-Wish Foundation. Shawna Wakeham-Smith with the Burlington’s MAW Foundation office accepted the check from Marianne Woiczechowski, Patient Account Specialist who organized the year-long fundraisers on the floor.

Organizers Pam Brink, Sharon Grenier and Judy Harbaugh hand off the hundreds of toys donated by NVRH employees to Christian Henault of the St. Johnsbury Fire Department. The hospital held a special dress-down day that requested a toy rather than money from employees. For those who chose to donate money, toys were purchased to add to the growing pile!
The Birth Center held an ugly sweater contest on Wednesday, December 18th. Out of all of the ugly sweaters, with their wearers’ cheerful smiles, George Foy won.

In the main lobby of the hospital, you will see our Memory Tree at this time of year. The idea was the brainstorm of an employee and is organized each year by Pat Forest, Volunteer Coordinator. Lovely blue bulb ornaments are purchased for $3 each in memory of a loved one who passed away. A ceremony is held, where the names of the people are read off, with a blessing and reading delivered by our interfaith Chaplain, Abby Pollender.

The Birth Center helped a family through HOPE (Helping Other People Every Day) in Lyndonville.

Blue Wrap Recycling Update

Diana Baugh-Lopez in SPD started the recycling of blue wrap in 2012, after working hard to put a program in place. In the past year (October – October), 1062 pounds of blue wrap has been recycled, which is very impressive. Blue wrap is used for wrapping surgical instruments for sterilization.

Diana wants to thank the nurses who initiate the recycling process, Donna Racine for transporting the wrap and sealing boxes, and the volunteers who remove stickers and tape from the wrap. It’s a team effort, and wouldn’t be possible without all of your participation. Thank You!
Stress Management for the Holidays

The holiday season often brings an increase in stress for many of us. In addition to our normally busy lives of managing home and work, we add in the extra activities of the holidays. Shopping, baking, cleaning, sending holiday cards, planning and attending get-togethers with family and friends fill our days. There is also the expectation that everything needs to be perfect.

More and more I hear about people deciding to simplify the holidays. This can be a good strategy for coping with holiday stress and can lead to enjoying the holidays even more. Since the term “perfection” is an oxymoron for the human condition, let’s start there. Making the decision to do the best you can is a more realistic goal. Set limits, force yourself to take a break, get some physical activity, eat as healthy as possible, and get enough sleep to keep yourself balanced. Simplify gift giving by thinking of meaningful items for each individual rather than “the newest and greatest thing”. Pictures, handmade items, gifts of time, cards with memories will long be appreciated.

As you plan and participate in holiday activities, stay in the moment. Appreciate the little things in life. Enjoy those special people we share time with because life changes quickly, often without notice. Do something nice for other people who may be isolated or having a difficult time during the holidays. Be thankful for having a caring work family and for living in a community where people look out for each other. These are the best gifts of all.

Happy Holidays! Betsy Fowler, LICSW, LADC

The Northern New England Poison Center Wants You to Have a Holly, Jolly Holiday

Nobody expects to call the poison center during the holidays, but poisonings sometimes happen because of changes in routine or increased distractions this time of year. Plan ahead and program your phone with the poison center phone number, 1-800-222-1222. Having this important number saved in your phone could be the best gift you give this year—it could prevent a trip to the hospital or save a life.

There's no place like home for the holidays

Suitcases and purses often contain medication or other toxic substances. Keep them out of the reach of children and pets if you are traveling or having guests.

- Mouthwash, liquid hand sanitizer, perfume and cologne may contain alcohol. Even small amounts can affect a child.
- Personal care products, like toothpaste and soap, can cause vomiting or diarrhea.
- Eating small amounts of tobacco products can be harmful causing nausea, vomiting and potentially seizures.
- Watches, cameras, hearing aids, games and calculators can contain button batteries (flat, coin-like batteries).
  - If swallowed, a button battery will usually pass through the body in the stool, but it can get stuck in the throat or stomach, which can cause serious burns.

O Christmas tree, o Christmas tree

The Christmas tree is the center of the holiday celebration in many homes. Keep your tree beautiful and your family safe during the holidays.

- Hang decorations out of the reach of young children and pets. Tinsel and some ornaments are choking hazards, and older ornaments may contain lead. Angel hair can irritate the mouth or eyes. Some bubble lights contain methylene chloride. If a light is opened or nibbled on it can cause skin or mouth irritation.

continued
Follow the directions when using snow spray to avoid breathing in the fumes or getting it in your eyes.

I saw mommy kissing Santa Claus

Common holiday plants include mistletoe, poinsettia, Christmas cactus, holly and Jerusalem cherry. Most can cause symptoms if swallowed by small children or pets.

- Swallowing mistletoe, poinsettias, holly or Jerusalem cherry can cause an upset stomach, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Touching mistletoe or a poinsettia can cause a rash for some people with sensitive skin.
- Christmas cactuses are not poisonous.

Walking in a winter wonderland

People often use salt on their driveways and sidewalks to prevent slips and falls. This salt can be dangerous to animals and children. Keep an eye on kids who are playing in salted areas, and keep the salt container out of their reach. Consider using sand instead.

Have a safe and fun holiday season. The Northern New England Poison Center is available 24/7. Call 1-800-222-1222 if you think someone has been poisoned, or if you just have poison-related questions. You can also visit www.nnepc.org to chat live with a specialist. TTY and language interpretation services are also available.

A Holiday Message
– Laural Ruggles

I want to share this incredible true story with a message for all-year round, but particularly at the holidays.

This is a true story that was told to me by a friend. She was sitting in her home and noticed a wooden plaque up on a shelf. It was one of those wooden plaques with a “saying” on it. It had been in the same place for years, but at that moment she thought “it doesn’t belong there” and took it down and put it on a table.

That next morning as she was leaving for work she saw the plaque on the table and for some reason she put it in the pocket of her coat. When she got to work she promptly forgot about it. Later that morning a customer came into her shop. The customer told her that a good friend of his son’s had recently died and the son was quite upset. The friend had been a mentor to the man’s son and often gave him good advice. The advice he gave most often was Just Be Nice.

My friend walked over to her coat and took the wooden plaque out of her pocket. She handed it to her customer and said “I think this is supposed to be for your son.” Yes, the plaque said Just Be Nice.

Whether written on a plaque, spoken out loud, or however the message is delivered, it is a good message for us all to keep in our hearts for the New Year: Just Be Nice.

The Willoughby Plunge on New Year’s Day
– A Wonderful Cause and A Day of Affirmation

The year’s end is quickly approaching. January 1st, 2014 is just days away which means it’s time to give a shout out to any and all who may wish to participate in the annual New Years Day - Lake Willoughby Dip, in partnership with the American Cancer Society with funds donated to Relay For Life - Caledonia County.

This community-wide event helps raise awareness and funds to support the fight against cancer.

Each year NVRH employees, friends and family make the commitment and take this exhilarating, chilly, even fun-filled splash together to show solidarity and support for all our families, friends, patients and community members fighting cancer.

As always this wonderful event is on New Years Day, January 1, 2014, 1PM sharp, at the North End of Willoughby Lake in Westmore, VT. Please consider joining us by participating, donating or even as a spectator. It is a wonderful day of affirmation for so many individuals, families and friends.

If you’d like to participate or donate, please contact Lizzy Berube in Respiratory Therapy at 748-7511.
Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital in St. Johnsbury awarded mini grants to four area organizations from the NVRH Community Health Fund. A community committee of twelve people selected Catamount Arts, Lyndon Town School, the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Task Force, and St. Johnsbury School as grant recipients for this year.

“We award grants for programs and services that address three health priority areas: obesity, poverty, and mental health or substance abuse,” said Laural Ruggles, VP Marketing and Community Health Improvement. The three health priority areas were determined by a community health needs assessment done by the hospital in 2012.

“Thank you to NVRH for recognizing and funding an amazing opportunity for girls at the St. Johnsbury School. I am so excited to be able to start the Girls On The Run program and work to create enough community support to sustain it over time. It will be such a great experience for the girls!” said Jen O’Farrell from the St. Johnsbury School when she heard news of the award.

The NVRH strategy for health supports a community building approach that goes beyond delivery of medical care to improving health and the quality of life for people in the communities we serve. Community building involves addressing the root cause of health problems such as poverty, as well as identifying and providing services and programs that directly influence health and quality of life.

“At NVRH we believe in partnering with community members and organizations with shared accountability to improve health and quality of life in the community,” said Paul Bengtson, CEO. “Making these small investments of financial support in existing community assets can go a long way to increase effectiveness and sustainability of programs and services.”

For more information about the NVRH Community Health Fund visit www.nvrh.org.
January
Study finds aging NFL players have higher than average rates of depression and cognitive deficits. The study (in Northern Texas) compared 34 retired NFL players (mean age 61.8 years) with 26 current NFL players. Results showed that of the retired players, 41% had cognitive deficits, 21% with fixed cognitive deficits, 24% with mild cognitive deficits, 24% with mild cognitive impairment, and 6% with dementia. The number of players with dementia was not different than was expected in the general population at this age. (JAMA Neurology, online,)

February
“Choosing Wisely” campaign of the American Board of Internal Medicine identifies 85+ common but unnecessary tests and procedures, often ordered for asymptomatic patients, as reported by Consumer Reports.

March
FDA approves CANAGLIFLOZIN (Inovoka, Janssen Pharmaceuticals) for treatment of adults with type-2 diabetes. One of the most common adverse reactions to the drug is UTI. (FDA)

April
Boston Marathon twin bombings proved the mettle of local disaster planning. The Boston Globe reported 286 injured, a number later reduced by the Boston Public Health Commission. Twenty-six hospitals provided emergency care. (Huffington Post/Boston Globe)

May
DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Medical Disorders, 5th edition) released. Incoming AMA President, Jeffery Lieberman, MD expressed concern that the new manual may divert scarce mental health resources away from those who need it most, calling the document “badly flawed”. DSM-IV chair, Dr. Allen Frances, advised providers to use the new edition, “cautiously, if at all”. (Annals of Internal Medicine, online)

June
Physicians at the AMA 2013 Annual Meeting voted overwhelmingly to declare obesity as a disease. According to the CDC, 35.7% of Americans are obese; obesity related conditions include heart disease, type-2 diabetes, stroke, and certain cancers.

July
Consumers of artificially sweetened beverages (ASB) were identified as being at risk for “excessive weight gain, metabolic syndrome, type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease” writes Susan Swithers, PhD, professor of behavioral neuroscience at Perdue. Such patients tend to have higher baseline BMI, compared with individuals who do not. Dr. Swithers concluded that findings suggest that cautions about the overall sweetening of the diet are warranted, regardless of the sweetener’s ability to provide energy directly. (Trends in Endocrinology and Metabolism)

August
Researchers from the Mayo Clinic reported that heavy coffee consumption (more than 4 cups/day) is associated with increased risk of all-cause mortality among men. In women, the risk was not substantially significant. (Mayo Clinic Proceedings)

September
American Diabetes Association began a study to identify the effects of cinnamon in improving fasting blood glucose and cholesterol levels. Cinnamon cassia, as a natural supplement (powdered or capsules) was the most common form of cinnamon studies (3g= 1 teaspoon). Testing of 543 patients included 7 trials of cinnamon taken with meals, and 3 trials where cinnamon was taken around mealtimes. Dosages ranged from 120 mg/day to 6g/day. Trials found not significant side effects with cinnamon use, and lower total cholesterol (-15.60 mg/dL), LDL cholesterol (-9.42 mg/dL), and triglycerides (-29.59), and an increase in HDL cholesterol (1.66 mg/dL; all mean values). (Annals Family Medicine)

October
Celebrity Tom Hanks shared his diabetes diagnosis on the CBS television show, Late Night with David Letterman, saying. “I think it’s a very important message that anybody can develop diabetes.” Celebrity disease can raise awareness of that particular disease/condition for the general public.
November  
Issued jointly by the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Treasury, the final report on Mental Health Parity and Addiction Act of 2008, which will increase parity between mental health/substance abuse disorders and medical/surgical benefits in group and individual health plans. The APA lauded the move, describing it as “a crucial step forward to ensure that patients receive the benefits they deserve and are entitled to, under the law,” as stated by APA president Jeffery Lieberman, MD.

December  
“The online registration process for the American Care Act and Vermont Health Connect both appear to be working more consistently and reliably, with positive increases in registration for both online formats.” (Devon Ayers, Outreach and Education Manager, Vermont Health Connect, at a Vermont Health Information Round Table (HiRT) Meeting, December 11, at Vermont Technical College, Randolph, VT.)

Linda Comfort, nurse at NVRH for the past 11 years (Day Surgery), recently retired. She and her husband (far right in the group photo) moved here from California to live the Vermont experience. For the next couple of years, they’re planning to stay in Vermont, but returning to sunny California is certainly in their future! Have fun Linda!

Services & Programs
Editor’s Note: Twice a year, Living Healthy Magazine is published by NorthStar Publishing in Danville. NVRH has always had an article in the magazine. In January, the latest publication will be arriving on news stands, and Eric Meyer’s article about asthma will be included. Read it here first, and contact Eric if you feel you could benefit from his expertise.

A Brief Course on Asthma
By Eric Meyer
34 Years as a Respiratory Therapist
28 Years at NVRH
Asthma Educator since 2007

Vermont, known for its open spaces, clean air and relative absence of industrialization, has one of the highest rates of asthma in the nation, according to the state Department of Health.

In 2010, one in 10 Vermont children and approximately 11 percent of adults had asthma, a chronic, recurring disease that can affect quality of life. However, with effective treatment, many people who have asthma are not limited in their ability to function, even as athletes.

State health officials are gathering data to learn why asthma affects so many Vermonters, especially those with lower income and education. Goals of the state asthma plan are to eliminate disparities and promote optimal care through improved diagnosis and treatment.

In the 1950s, asthma was considered and treated as a psychosomatic illness, induced by stress and anxiety. The doctor of choice was a psychiatrist. Nowadays, asthma is recognized as a chronic lung disease and is treated by pulmonologists and allergists. However the stigma of asthma patient mental unreliability has come full circle; management of asthma is centered on objective measurements rather than subjective. Even the obvious of “How short of breath are you?” is dubious because asthmatics tend to underestimate and under treat their symptoms, which leads to greater problems in the long run.

continued
Asthma is an overreaction by the lungs to particular triggers. Those triggers include allergens, such as pollen, animal dander or dust mites, and irritants, such as cigarette smoke, cold air or perfume. Asthma symptoms can also be caused by exercise, emotional stress (hence their treatment as a psychosomatic illness), lung infections, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and postnasal drip.

The human body has developed defense mechanisms to cope with unwelcome intruders, and the airways of the lungs are particularly vulnerable. When a bug flies into the lungs, the person coughs to get rid of it. In asthma, certain triggers in certain individuals can induce an overreaction, which actually causes more harm than good. The overreaction is displayed in symptoms of persistent coughing, wheezing and/or shortness of breath. Other diseases can cause these symptoms, so testing along with the clinical history is recommended.

Physiologically, an overreaction to a trigger occurs this way: the muscles lining the airways tighten to narrow and protect them; mucus is produced to harbor and remove the intruder; and the inner airway swells with inflammation as the body brings in the defensive forces to limit and attack the culprit. Those reactions combine to narrow the airways resulting in the wheezing, shortness of breath and coughing.

The definitive tool for diagnosis of asthma is a breathing test called spirometry, which measures resistance in the lung airways. The testing consists of exhaling into a tube as fast and as long as possible. It doesn't sound like much, but it can be taxing. Spirometry measures airway resistance at the time of the test, which is not necessarily when patients are at their worst. Ideally, the asthma should be under control and the spirometry will demonstrate no airway resistance. This does not mean that the testing subject does not have asthma.

Further testing may be needed to determine whether a person indeed has asthma. Additional tests are grouped as provocation tests. They involve inhaling a known quantity of a chemical agent, which will cause some degree of airway tightness in everyone, but the asthmatic patient will be more sensitive. These are rigorously controlled tests and are done in a safe environment. In my experience it is rare that the patient equals or exceeds the symptoms that indicated the test was needed in the first place.

As a side note, spirometry is one of several exams done in pulmonary function testing. Another test looks at the ability of the subject to transfer oxygen from the lungs into the bloodstream (DLCO). For some reason, asthmatics, in particular active asthmatics, tend to run above normal on this, meaning that asthmatic lungs seem to be more efficient in passing oxygen to the bloodstream. The DLCO test is used to confirm an asthma diagnosis.

The inflammation that accompanies asthma usually is caused by the involvement of a particular type of white blood cell, the eosinophil, which produces a gas called nitric oxide (not nitrous). A relatively new test measures the exhaled nitric oxide and thus measures inflammation. This is a very simple test, which is useful for determining control of asthma.

Avoiding triggers is by far the best action an asthmatic can take to prevent symptoms. Suggestions include: keeping bedrooms clean and free of dust; using hypoallergenic bedding; keeping pets out of bedrooms; avoiding excessive humidity (to reduce mold); and stopping smoking and avoiding the presence of smoke. For exercise-induced asthma, taking a longer warm up and wearing a mouth filter, such as a scarf in cold weather, can be effective. Everyone should wear a mask when in the presence of dust particles or irritating chemicals.

Medications for asthma are divided into two main types: bronchodilators and anti-inflammatories. Bronchodilators relax the muscles that line the airways. Anti-inflammatories reduce the defensive reaction of the airways to triggers that produce asthmatic symptoms.

Most bronchodilators are inhaled directly into the lungs. They include short-acting, rescue medications and long-acting, maintenance medications. Since the rescue medications provide instant relief, they have a great tendency to be abused. The major problem with abuse is that there may be a decrease in sensitivity to the positive effect of those medications. That leads to greater abuse and makes control of asthma more difficult.

Anti-inflammatories consist of inhaled steroids and immunoresponse suppressors. These are classified as maintenance drugs, meaning they are designed to prevent asthmatic symptoms from occurring in the first place and thus reduce the need for rescue medications. Unfortunately, their effect is subtle and they must be used regularly to be effective. Compliance with usage of these drugs can be an issue. Inhaled steroids are currently the primary drugs used for controlling asthma.
Inhaled drugs may be taken either as a nebulized mist or an inhaler. Proper techniques for inhaling the medications are essential for their effectiveness.

Management consists of monitoring for symptoms and developing an action plan for those times when symptoms arise. Symptoms to monitor, in addition to wheezing, shortness of breath and coughing, include breathing difficulties during sleep (nocturnal symptoms); inability to perform daily activities at a normal level; frequency of use of rescue inhalers; a reduction in peak flow measurements (an abbreviated spirometry test that can be done at home); and simply not getting better. Control of asthma is measured by tabulating all those factors.

Ideally, an asthmatic whose disease is under control should have absolutely normal lung function. By avoiding triggers, taking medications and monitoring for any symptoms, an asthmatic should not be hindered by asthma.

Auxiliary/Volunteer NEWS

By Pat Forest, Volunteer Coordinator

The NVRH Auxiliary and Volunteers would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support in 2013. With your assistance we had another successful year in raising funds to support NVRH programs and patients. We look forward to another productive year in 2014! Wishing you all the very best in coming year.

The next NVRH Auxiliary Meeting will be held on Friday, January 17th. Lunch will be served in the Courtyard Café at Noon with the meeting to follow in conference rooms 126 & 127 at 12:30. Hope to see you there!

△ Volunteers who received their Presidential Awards for 2013.

△ Pat Forest and Emily Hahr at the Auxiliary’s Annual Meeting – Emily received her 100 hour pin and a Bronze Presidential Award.

礞 Look at those new privacy windows at Corner Medical that were purchased through the Auxiliary Wish list! This is one of the many ways the Auxiliary benefits the hospital. Staff at Corner Medical are very grateful!
I never cease to be amazed by the people who work at NVRH. So many truly kind and wonderful members of our NVRH family! Of course, as is the case with any family, some members have passed away. Yet their influence continues to be felt.

One of those who have died is Jim Broderick, formerly our Lead Laundry Worker. Jim brought a peaceful and cheerful presence to us every day he worked here. He had a wisdom that came with a mature and integrated view of life.

The following is a deeply touching story written by Jamie Fenoff, the nine year-old daughter of Holli Fenoff from the OR. It contains some spelling errors which we will forgive. But the story speaks to the admiration which Holli had for Jim Broderick, the late husband of Carol Broderick in SPD.

Ten years after Jim’s death, we still remember him.

Jamie Fenoff
How I got my Name

Have you every wondered how I got the name Jamie? Well, it all started when my mom got pregnant with me. My mom was going to name me Gaby. My mom had a friend name Jim, and a girl name Carale. Jim’s real name was James. One day mom went to the doctors to check on me. The doctor told mom I was sick. Two days later James had a heart attack and died. Mom change my name to Jamie because she couldn’t name my James. My nick name is James to my mom. Mom and Carale went down to the doctors to check again on me. The doctor said I was all right. Now people say James died to make sure I was all right.

THE END
What is the purpose and objective of this mission? The mission is to “HELP” with the cleanliness of the hospital by the simple action of just stomping your feet or knocking the ice and snow and salt of your shoes when entering the hospital. I believe that we have a great hospital and we owe it to each other to continue to uphold the professional appearance of NVRH. We are the night crew that cleans and we take great pride in what we do. It would help us immensely if people would stomp their feet and try to clear their boots as much as possible when they come in from the outside. We are stronger when we think about others. Many thanks, Bill Austin, Night Supervisor/Project Leader in Environmental Services

OPERATION “STOMP FEET”

Paula Gaskin and Christle Brooks from the Northeastern Vermont Regional Primary Care Practices, Corner Medical and Kingdom Internal Medicine attended the ASTHO Million Hearts Learning Collaborative in Washington DC on December 12th and 13th. Vermont is one of ten states chosen by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials to participate in the collaborative focusing on Hypertension Identification, control and improvement. The team from Vermont also included representatives from the Vermont Department of Health, Fletcher Allen Health Care, Rutland Regional Medical Center, Department of Vermont Health Access, Vermont BlueCross Blue Shield and Dr. Harry Chen, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Health. The initiative is coordinating ASTHO with all the State Health Partners to identify a population of individuals with uncontrolled hypertension and establish quality improvement processes.

Community

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital’s Director of Development Jim Flynn recently spoke to members of The St. Johnsbury Senior Center about proposed new projects at the hospital. “The hospital focuses on what our community and patient needs are,” said Jim. He mentioned the current expansion of St. Johnsbury Pediatrics; tied in with that project is additional office space for Dan Wyand Physical Therapy in St. Johnsbury. There are plans to renovate a current operating room into a higher-tech larger operating room, and Kingdom Internal Medicine will eventually occupy the entire Breezy Hill Medical Building that North Country Otolaryngology and Audiology (NCOA) recently vacated. NCOA moved into their new space in the Bloch Building. He also mentioned new practices, such as Palliative Care and The Pain Clinic.

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital once again held its annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, thanks to Care Manager Pam Brink (right), and Executive Assistant Judy Harbaugh (middle). Walter Berniere, Jr., volunteer with the St. Johnsbury area food shelf is on the left. Employees donated money to purchase 19 turkeys and hundreds of pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables. Additionally, over 1,000 pounds of food was brought in by employees to help stock the area food shelf.
Construction UPDATE

Compressed Gas: You may have noticed the work going on in the back of the building. This is for the installation of the piping and cement pad for the compressed gas heating system. There are two small pads remaining to be poured, but the piping has been completed. The equipment on the pad (which isn’t installed yet) heats the gas and reduces the pressure, then sends it to the building. There has been a delay but the project will be completed this winter.

The new burner heads on the boilers are about 5 feet long. They will burn both oil and compressed natural gas; oil is the back up, and the compressed gas will be the primary fuel.

The Moffett Building (St. J Peds and Physical Therapy): The new section is closed in! The construction crew is framing inside, working on wiring, plumbing, ductwork and the sprinkler system. At least it’s warm inside now. The crew worked right through the coldest days last week (because they're really tough), but they're taking advantage of the warmer days too.

Nuclear Medicine: Our plant operations staff worked on the renovation of the Nuclear Medicine room for a month. The old machine was replaced with a Siemens Symbia camera, which is a modernized version of our original 13 year old camera. More about how the upgrade can help our patients later; for now, the new system is in and is being tested and calibrated.

The machine arrived in 14 crates on an 18-wheeler. It took two technicians from Siemens four days to assemble the new machine.

The room was gutted, and sheetrock and doors lined with lead were installed. Just to give you an idea of the construction: each sheet of sheetrock weighed about 200 lbs and cost $400 apiece, which is $8,000 worth of sheetrock. There are 2 leaded doors which are $2,000 each. The glass window in the tech area is $2,200. The electric system had to be completely re-wired. Straight from the construction expert’s mouth: “Here at NVRH Construction, Inc., we believe in going the extra mile for everyone.”
Remember Skida Hats?

…Those bright, multicolored hats that are warm, quick drying and comfortable. For every hat you purchase online (http://shopskida.com/), go to SKIDA[+1] and enter the promotional code “NVRH”, a FREE hat will be sent to our Circle of Care Boutique in the Bloch Building. Volunteers can then donate to a cancer patient a beautiful, cheerful hat to warm his or her head. This is a terrific program, and we are extremely grateful to be part of it.

Hilary wearing her favorite Skida hat, which she calls her “joy” hat. It’s tough not to smile while wearing that hat!

A variety of the many patterns of Skida hats sold at the Circle of Care Boutique.

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**A+ Standard of Caring**

**NOVEMBER 2013**

**Ambulatory Surgery**
+ I enjoyed the light touch and sense of humor of the people working with me.
+ A good experience and I could watch it on the TV.
+ I asked for minimum meds and that worked fine for me.
+ Excellent! No marks the next day!
+ The nurse anesthetist (Carol Ruhlmann) was especially helpful, she listened to my concerns and came up with an excellent plan.
+ All very good, nice and clean and neat.
+ Everybody was very friendly and courteous.
+ Had complete confidence in the doctor (Walko) and all the nurses I had contact with that day.
+ All of this was a very good experience - would definitely recommend this Ambulatory Surgery Center to others.
+ Thank you for the opportunity to comment on my first experience at NVRH - I was extremely satisfied and would not hesitate to go back or refer friends and family to your hospital.
+ **Dr. Larsen** is a FINE doctor and the nurses were good this time!!
+ Easiest IV ever.

+ I have no complaints - all were caring and very good to me -
+ Post Op nurses were OUTSTANDING.
+ No delays, no problems whatsoever.

**Emergency Department**
+ Everyone was very helpful & nice.
+ There were no delays, were tended to very quickly, and my daughter was correctly diagnosed with little discomfort to her. And she’s 2, so that’s good!
+ The gentleman who took our info was extremely personable and made the experience pleasant.
+ She was very polite and patient.
+ Best nursing care we’ve ever received!
+ **Michael** was very helpful and courteous!
+ **Dr. Stan Baker** is a wonderful doctor and he was very good at my treatment. I have always been treated well at NVRH.
+ The nurse was very nice and gave me information that will help me. Very nice. Understanding - Helped me fast and without all the run around.
+ Very good. I felt better after I left. Really satisfied. Quick and easy.
+ **Dr. Sargent** was great!
+ All very immediate and helpful.
+ Others told me about you. Thanks.
Excellent - understanding.

+ Mike was a great guy.
+ I have no complaints. I am healing well.
+ Very thorough and detailed explanation of possible causes of my condition.
+ Friendly and efficient environment.
+ Staff friendly & helpful.
+ I only saw the NP that night - she was great.
+ The radiology staff member was fabulous.
+ The woman in Radiology was very considerate and professional.
+ I had the same symptoms two years ago and just wanted to make sure that the symptoms that were worse weren’t something worse with my right knee –
+ I was treated well and with respect -
+ The woman was very nice and well trained -
+ He was a joy! Great sense of humor and he explained everything to my satisfaction.
+ All of the above was excellent - Great service - “Better than home.”
+ All the staff was great at the hospital but radiology staff were the best.
+ Very friendly, attentive.
+ This was the best experience in a hospital I have ever had and my first visit to NVRH as a patient.
+ Doctor, nurses, technicians and staff were all wonderful.

Inpatient Department
+ I couldn’t have been in a better place!
+ I had a good experience at the hospital the staff was very good.
+ If I had a lot of company, but they were all treated good.
+ I would like to give my special thanks to Terry, Noah, Tanya and Ike for the wonderful care they gave me. Thank you all for my care.
+ Both my family and I were treated with respect, courtesy, understanding and a positive attitude.
+ Each nurse was kind, gentle, attentive and informative. Wonderful care.
+ Wonderful staff that involved and answered questions for my family.
+ Dr. Dreisbach was wonderful. I felt so comfortable and knowledgeable about everything.
+ Keith Ruede explained every aspect of my surgery and aftercare during the pre-op process.
+ The Care Management and Patient Care Team were so informative. Each patient care team member from my first encounter was exceptional. I felt so comfortable.
+ I have and will continue to recommend both NVRH and Dr. Dreisbach to others.
+ I really liked the physician - He took time with me to answer my questions.
+ Very good - answered my questions so I understood.
+ I was in extreme pain, but the guy admitting me was patient & helpful.
+ Your hospital is very comfortable.
+ Loved your food service employees. So friendly and attentive.
+ Your IV starter, in ER, was magnificent.
+ That physician can work on me anytime I need him.
+ Staff rated excellent in all areas.
+ The one meal I was allowed to have was excellent!
+ The nurses set up a crib for my baby and a bed for my husband, very nice!
+ Can’t wait to have another baby at this hospital.
+ Excellent - understanding.

+ Joann & Valerie great nurses!! My favorite out of them all.

Kingdom Internal Medicine
+ The doctor on duty was very thorough in questioning before giving prescriptions.
+ There were no delays! Immediate attention.
+ No waiting time.
+ Almost always get an appointment when needed.
+ Nurses w Dr. always great.
+ Love my Dr. Tom Ziokowski.
+ Always clean.
+ Love the practice - been a patient for years now.
+ Could not ask for anything more - very friendly & helpful, yet professional.
+ I have the greatest confidence and respect for Dr. Ziokowski. We are so fortunate in this area that he is willing to serve the community.
+ I could not be more pleased. Everyone is so friendly and helpful. The doctor explains everything very thoroughly and in appropriate terms - right balance between technical & lay.
+ I am now 87 years - Dr. Meierdiercks has obviously done something right –
+ Excellent patient/dr. relationship.
+ Feel very comfortable with Jessica M. and feel she is very knowledgeable.
+ They deserve an A+ rating.
+ I’ve already recommended Jessica to relatives and others.
+ Very courteous & concerned about why you are there.
+ I’ve been with this care giver for many years and am very confident in him.
+ Dr. was proactive & informative.

Corner Medical
+ Joyce Dobbertin is outstanding.
+ Very courteous and concerned.
+ I really like Dr. Hebert. He knows I am always nervous when I come in and always reassures me.
+ We feel very fortunate to be treated as we are.
+ We always feel fine about the attention we receive.
+ All seem to be working hard to keep me alive and well!
+ Both Sandy and Dr. Erisman are superb!
+ Like my doctor very much and very satisfied.
+ Never have problems as I try to schedule a 1:00 appointment.
+ I have rarely had an issue accessing Corner Medical when needed.
+ Amy was wonderful! Fast and efficient.
+ Dr. Joyce Dobbertin is amazing. She continues to support and encourage me in making healthier lifestyle choices without coming across as patronizing.
+ The staff & establishment itself exceeded in this category.
+ Staff went out of way to get me a same day appointment, so wait time was understandable.
+ Very prompt.
+ Very good and accommodating.
+ The staff is very accommodating & friendly.
+ The nurse is very friendly (I forgot to get her name) and she’s always smiling.
+ She’s so nice and she’s very good to explain.
+ Have been seeing Dr. Broderick for years & he has stood by me during complications.
+ He is caring, thorough & willing to work with my needs.
+ I feel fortunate that we have such a good, community practice up here, but worry about continued quality & patient commitment as we lose the original Corner Medical Care founding physicians.
+ The staff is good about cleanliness. The do care about my privacy and most of the time show sensitivity towards issues pertaining to psych issues, etc.
+ Dr. Erisman is an excellent doctor. I have had her as my primary care physician for 17 yrs, I have a good word about Dr. Gresser too, although she isn't my regular PCP, she helped me a great deal in 2011 - when I was very ill.
+ Dr. Dobbertin is an excellent doctor. So personable & professional.
  + I expected to have to wait but was seen quickly, which was helpful since I had my baby with me!
  + Very pleasant front desk people!
  + Nurse was very professional!
  + I love Dr. Erisman! She always listens and is extremely professional in her knowledge!
  + Corner Medical is very efficient!
  + I love my doctor!!!

St. Johnsbury Pediatrics
+ We went to the clinic @ night. That's a great feature to have for parents that work.
+ Feel very fortunate to have Dr. Josh as our pediatrician.
+ This was much better than last year when we waited for over an hour to receive a very quick nasal flu vaccine. This year we attended their new flu clinic and it took very little time.
+ Very friendly staff. Doctor takes time and answers ALL questions.
  + Does not rush appt.
  + Spoke with my daughter face to face and made her feel good about the conversation.

Womens Wellness Center
+ Very polite and friendly.
  + I have recommended Dr. Paul to 3 or 4 people.
  + Very clean and neat.
  + Nothing but excellent care.
  + The registration staff is amazing.
  + Megan Haygood is great - always takes the time to listen - Never is in a rush to get you through!
  + Very happy with my choice of provider. Confidence in her skills & assessments.
  + Kim & Tina are super nice and really work hard to work out scheduling needs.
  + I experienced no delays.
  + Dr. Kenny is the best around. Coming to see her is like coming to see an old friend.
  + I have never felt rushed and always leave completely informed. I wish I could see her for everything!
  + Very friendly clinic makes going to doctor enjoyable.
  + Extremely happy!
  + Have never waited longer than 5 minutes. Very pleased.
  + All staff members have been courteous and professional the entire time.
  + All OB/GYNs and midwives have been wonderful!
  + I first came to WWC after a miscarriage. It was the staff’s caring and friendly dispositions that brought me back with my 2nd pregnancy. Wonderful people!!
  + I can’t say enough good things about the staff at WWC. Professional, unbiased, caring, compassionate, informative and understanding. A wonderful experience so far!
  + I was pleased to be offered a flu shot, offer accepted.
  + All staff encountered did seem to be working very efficiently in coordination with each other.

Outpatient Departments
+ Never had it so good!!
+ Way and above previous experience at other places.
+ Edwina in the lab treated me so well and was so professional. I wish everyone was like her – I didn’t even have a bruise from the blood draw!
  + Couldn’t believe the efficiency & care - Damn fast & professional -
  + Great personalities - Everywhere.
  + Clean, well kept & well lit.
  + Did not have to wait was taken to a room by nurse.
  + Lab tech was great! Didn’t even feel it.
  + I had called to pre-register and left a message the woman returned my call promptly and was very helpful.
  + Very convenient.
  + Cheerful and positive.
  + Efficient & quick.