



Centers of Excellence Award Winner

Wilson Medical Center Models Healthy Habits for Community

Being a major employer and the “health hub” of the community, Wilson Medical Center in Neodesha recognized its responsibility to set the example of good health in the communities it serves. Located in a county with some of the poorest health rankings in Kansas, Wilson Medical Center initiated a comprehensive program to improve health and change the trajectory of obesity and related illnesses, such as diabetes. Signing on to the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative in 2015 began the journey and commitment to improving the health of employees and community members, as well as patients.

With the support of the Wilson Medical Center medical staff, board of trustees and hospital leaders, a formal Dietary and Catering policy was written and

implemented in August 2015. It has increased the availability of healthy foods and beverages in the hospital, and led to the removal of a soda fountain machine and sugary drinks from the hospital cafeteria. The hospital serves no fried foods and does not have a deep fat fryer. The hospital built on its nutritional efforts by promoting regular exercise and weight loss. These activities soon expanded to include the entire community.

In recognition of its innovation and achievements, Wilson Medical Center has been named one of three recipients of the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence* awards for 2017.



Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation President **Melissa Hungerford**, left, presented a \$1,000 check to Wilson Medical Center Chief Executive Officer **Dennis Shelby**. KHERF recognized Wilson Medical Center as one of three winners of the 2017 *Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence* awards.

“Wilson Medical Center’s mission is to promote, improve and restore health to the communities we serve. We need to set the example, and people should see the hospital as a model of good health. We want to help change the unhealthy behaviors in our community.”

— Janice Reese, Marketing/ Foundation Director

Healthy Kansas Hospitals

Hospital leaders and staff embraced joining the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative, a project led by the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation. The program informs and supports local initiatives to promote healthy food and beverage environments in hospitals.

Wilson Medical Center formed a Wellness Committee to help implement strategies for addressing preventable diseases like obesity. The committee brought people who want to promote wellness to the table; physical therapy and rehabilitation representatives championed the desire to help individuals become healthier. Together with hospital leaders and community partners,

Wilson Medical Center has implemented healthier food and beverage policies, an Ideal Weight and Wellness program and incentives for employees to use the hospital-based gym. WMC also has partnered with local businesses and area school districts on targeted efforts to improve public health.

Healthier Food and Beverage Choices

One of the first things addressed internally was sugary beverages provided in the cafeteria. “Our CEO met with all departments to discuss the need to set a healthy example in the community by starting within and making some environmental changes like the removal of the soda fountain machine. He provided information about the amount of sugar in pops, energy drinks,

Modeling Health for the Community

juices and other beverages,” Reese said. “This helped open a door of conversation and to get a feel for potential reaction to the hospital taking out soda machines. Initially, we planned to leave diet drinks, but employees felt that diet drinks were not that good for you either,” she explained. With buy-in from employees, the hospital removed the pop machine and stopped serving sugary drinks in the dining area. Instead, water, unsweetened tea and coffee are offered at no charge. “Because of the approach we took, the changes were very well received. No one was upset with removal of the pop machine,” Reese noted.

In addition, the hospital dietitian and nutrition manager assessed the merchandise in the hospital’s snack vending machines. Unhealthy options were eliminated and replaced with healthier options. For example, fresh fruit cups replaced candy; brownies and other pastries were replaced with grain and protein bars. Baked chips now are offered. Reese reports that the changes were well received.

The nutrition manager worked with the dietitian to create healthy menu options in the cafeteria. Fresh fruit or vegetable bowls are served instead of desserts at least three times a week and usually are sold out. The salad bar serves high nutrient lettuce, such as romaine and leaf, as well as fresh spinach. The hospital has increased its budget for fruit and vegetables to 12 percent, up 2 percent over the previous year. Vegetables are fresh or frozen and are steamed or oven roasted. Less than 2 percent of vegetables are canned products. Bananas, oranges and apples are usually available daily.

No Bake Energy Bites

1/2 cup	Quick-cooking oats
1/2 cup	Ground flax seed
1/2 cup	Peanut butter
2/3 cup	Toasted coconut
1/2 cup	Chocolate chips
1/3 cup	Honey
1 tsp.	Vanilla

Mix all ingredients well, and place in mini-cupcake foils.

The facility does not serve fried food and does not have a deep fat fryer. The dietary team makes sure the cafeteria line has at least one healthy entrée. Employees and visitors are informed about the heart-healthy entrée, and a pricing strategy of charging less for healthy items encourages a healthier choice.

Getting Fit

In 2015, the hospital took another step with its Get Fit Gym. The Rehabilitation Department, which uses part of the gym, was expanded, and the gym was renovated. New equipment was purchased, and the hours were changed to 24 hours, seven days a week to provide flexible exercise times for shift employees as well as the community. When patients are released from physical therapy, they receive a month-long free membership in the gym to

encourage them to continue their recovery. During regular business hours, wellness coaches are available to help individuals with workout routines.

In March 2016, the hospital implemented a policy providing all current employees with free conditional membership in the Get Fit Gym, with a discounted rate for family members. Employees must use the gym at least four times per month to qualify for the free membership.

In June 2016, more exercise classes – such as dance fitness – and yoga were added to options available at the gym, and the classes were opened to both gym members and non-members. In January 2017, new seniors’ restorative yoga and a boot camp were added to gym classes.

Discounted membership rates are offered to local businesses and industries. Get Fit 24/7 is working with the City of Neodesha to provide the same free membership and family discount to all city employees, which potentially can impact 200 people.

Weight Loss Program

In 2016, the hospital hired a Community Wellness Manager to bring programs on improving health and preventing diseases to the community. One successful program is the Ideal Weight and Wellness Program. Employees who choose to use the program receive wellness coaching and products at cost. To keep people engaged, challenges have been made to employees as well as the community. For example, the first challenge was the Maintain Your Weight Challenge through the holidays. Some 75 participants maintained their weight, or were within 1 percent of it.

The Diabetes Educator also developed classes on nutrition and exercise for both employees and the community. For example, classes have been offered that deal with reading food labels and portion control. Participants learned that controlling the amount of food consumed (portion sizes) and an increase in activity would assist in losing unwanted weight.

Looking ahead, the hospital is considering adding more cooking and meal planning classes to help young families provide healthier balanced meals, and developing more activities that promote fitness and weight loss.

Community Partnerships

Beyond activities to improve the health of employees and their families, Wilson Medical Center expanded its efforts to improve health – through diet, exercise and education – to businesses, industries and school districts. Among the many community-outreach activities are:

- The WMC Rehabilitation Department goes into an industry/business twice a week to lead exercises and stretches, and assess work patterns to identify preventable injuries. This program has reduced injuries and time away from work.
- The hospital partners with USD 467 Neodesha School District to bring “Fitness Is Fun” to the after-school program. Approximately 120 youth receive 40 minutes of exercise and/or physical education twice a week. The hospital also provides sports physicals for the local school district’s athletes.
- Second- and fifth-grade classes are invited to participate in WMC’s “Healthy Kids’ Day” at the hospital’s walking/jogging trail. Participants receive hands-on learning through healthy stations promoting a well-balanced lifestyle. Some of the stations promote healthy nutrition, instruction on making healthy trail mix, hydration/healthy drink options and My Plate visual instruction.

Modeling Health for the Community

- WMC's Get Fit 24/7 collaborates with another gym in the county to stage the Wilson County 5K Run, along with one-mile options and other running events. Gym staff members help participants get in shape for the races, and everyone who participates receives a t-shirt.
- The CEO and Community Relations/Marketing Director work with the County Health Department and another hospital in the county on obesity and community health initiatives to promote a healthier lifestyle for residents.

Tips/Advice/Lessons Learned

Reese shared several tips that she believes were critical to the hospital's success:

Communicate with employees and obtain buy-in. "Be sure employees are informed first, and understand and support your activities," Reese said. "I think it's important to communicate and emphasize to employees the need to set the example of wellness. Communicating the need for a cultural change helped begin our journey to a healthier hospital. Wilson Medical Center is a trusted source of hospital services and can help people have a healthier lifestyle and prevent chronic illnesses, such as diabetes," Reese stated.

Find fun ways to present wellness. "The weight challenge was successful. Employees like to participate in our marathon program, and enjoyed our educational programs, which we provide regularly," Reese noted.

Celebrate successes. Recognition and positive support are important. "Recognizing individuals who participate and successfully achieve goals is important. We send emails to our employees to let everyone know who participates in challenges and achieves their goals. Sometimes we have award recognition ceremonies and provide gifts such as t-shirts for their achievements," she explained.

Model desired behavior. "To bring people in sync with our healthy hospital mission, we must 'walk the talk.' At special functions we serve healthy options

such as vegetable and fruit trays, instead of cookies and brownies. We also have tried other healthy alternatives like dried fruit such as banana chips, cranraisins and nuts. Our nutrition manager has developed 'energy bites' made with oatmeal and peanut butter; they are high in protein and contain no sugar, and everyone wants the recipe," Reese said.



Wilson Medical Center sets a healthy example with the food it serves at special functions, offering vegetable and fruit trays, individual cupped energy bites and dried fruits, like banana chips, cranraisins and nuts.

"The commitment WMC has made to the Healthy Kansas Hospitals program reaches beyond our walls. We want to take it to our communities to help those we serve live a healthier lifestyle."

— Janice Reese, Marketing/Foundation Director

About Wilson Medical Center

Wilson Medical Center (WMC) is a county owned Critical Access Hospital that has been providing health care for more than 100 years and is committed to its mission, seeking excellence in promoting, improving and restoring health through service to the community. Patient care is the hospital's highest commitment, and the following services are provided: Acute Care, Surgical Services, X-ray, Laboratory, Respiratory, Rehabilitation, Pain Management, Emergency Room, Diabetes Management, Ideal Weight & Wellness Program and Specialized Telemedicine. WMC is known for a very unique program not normally found in rural hospitals, The Regional Wound and Hyperbaric Medicine Center. WMC also focuses on health and wellness for the community and its employees by providing the Get Fit 24/7 gym. The hospital expanded its outreach to neighboring communities and now owns and operates two rural health clinics, located in Independence and Cherryvale, Kansas. A new service added to address chronic illnesses is the Chronic Care Nurse Management program.

About Healthy Kansas Hospitals

Healthy Kansas Hospitals is a project of the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation to encourage Kansas hospitals to improve food and beverage policies and become community role models; the program also provides resources and information. The KHERF was created in 1969 by the Kansas Hospital Association to facilitate collaboration and innovation to improve health delivery for Kansas communities. The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization that is the leading advocate and resource for Kansas hospitals. For more information, visit www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org.

KANSAS HOSPITAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION

215 S.E. Eighth Ave. | Topeka, KS 66603-3906 | (785) 233-7436

www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org