

Centers of Excellence Award Winner

Community HealthCare System Emphasizes Healthier Lifestyle Choices

Attending a seminar about the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative two years ago generated the enthusiasm and provided the stimulus for Community HealthCare System in northeast Kansas to step up its game in improving the health and well-being of its more than 450 associates in seven locations and in the communities in the 10,000-square-mile area it serves. Four CHCS staff members attended the conference organized by the Kansas Hospital Association and were “blown away” by what other Kansas hospitals were doing. The four realized that the system already was doing many of the things encouraged by *Healthy Kansas Hospitals*, and decided they could work collaboratively to take their involvement in fitness and wellness to new levels.

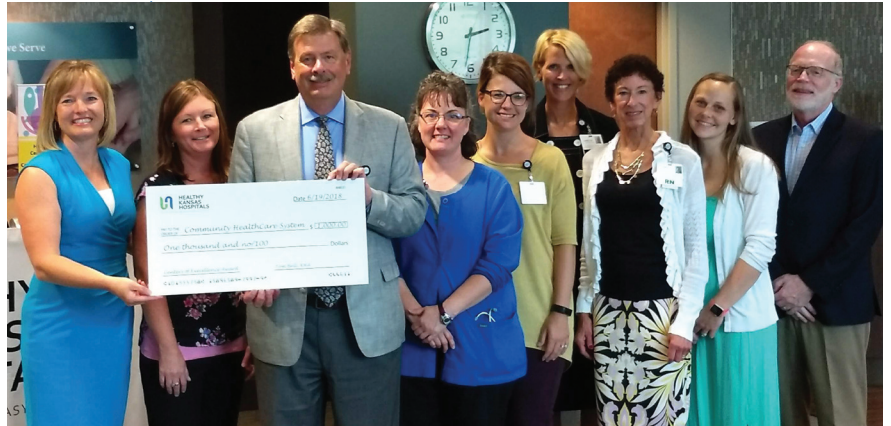
Talking together in the car on the drive home, their creative electricity energized the four to form the LiveWell Committee which would focus on policy development for its *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* involvement and create a structured, collaborative plan to enhance and expand healthy living activities and resources. The committee includes key influential figures throughout the health care system, as well as the Chief Executive Officer, Education Coordinator and the Nutritional Services Manager. The healthy lifestyle changes and activities the committee identifies are promoted by staff, managers, directors, providers and the executive staff.

“We realize how important it is to create a healthy environment for our associates and the communities we serve,” said Nancy Willert, RN, committee chair. “Our system’s mission is to enrich the health and lives of the people we serve,” she added.

In recognition of its achievements and innovative activities as part of the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* program, Community HealthCare System received one of two 2018 Centers of Excellence Awards presented by the Kansas Hospital Association.

“This award shows us that we are headed in the right direction, and this recognition from KHA encourages us as we move forward with new initiatives,” Nancy Willert said.

Support by the governing board and hospital leadership is key to the success of wellness initiatives, she believes. CHCS Chief Executive Officer and LiveWell Committee member Todd Willert commented on the system’s statewide recognition. “I am incredibly proud of our organization and honored by this award. I’ve been a part of the committee, and I know the tremendous amount of time and effort that committee members have spent working on our wellness initiatives over the past two years,” he said. “These are people who have full-time jobs, and this is something else they are doing for the good of the organization and the community,” he added. When asked why the hospital has invested the time and resources in



Cindy Samuelson, left, vice president of the Kansas Hospital Association, presented a *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* Center of Excellence Award and check to Community HealthCare System representatives on June 19. Hospital representatives included Holly Schmitz, second from left, dietitian and manager of nutrition services; Todd Willert, Community HealthCare System President and CEO; Michelle Budreau, respiratory therapist; Emily Zutterman, patient accounts representative; Andrea Lutz, rehab and fitness manager; Nancy Willert, education coordinator; and Jessica Husman, occupational therapist. Tom Bell, far right, president and CEO of Kansas Hospital Association, recognized the system’s commitment and innovative actions to improving the health of the communities it serves.

promoting fitness and better nutritional choices, Todd Willert says, “This is not about return-on-investment. This is about doing what’s right. It’s part of our long-term global population health strategy. How do we put ourselves in our associates’ and community members’ shoes and help them improve their health?”

‘We realize how important it is to create a healthy environment for our associates and the communities we serve.’

— Nancy Willert, RN, LiveWell Committee Chair

One way the hospital encourages its staff to make healthy lifestyle choices is by offering all associates an annual monetary wellness benefit to spend on health-related items, like gym memberships or wellness visits. Through its LiveWell Committee, CHCS began implementing free, fun, creative and interactive wellness activities showcasing exercise and physical activity and encouraging healthier nutritional choices in vending machines and in the cafeteria. Samples of healthy items – such as squash lasagna, black bean brownies, chickpea salad and quinoa salad – and beverages – such as infused water – introduced new tastes and ideas.

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Early Adopters

For more than 20 years, the northeast Kansas hospital system has been involved in physical fitness, which they promoted through four community-based fitness centers, a pool and five rehabilitation facilities as well as a variety of community fitness events. From fitness classes and physical therapy to fun runs and fitness challenges, CHCS has worked to engage the community and get people moving. “After the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* seminar, we asked how can we amp up what we’re doing in terms of fitness? How can we change vending machine options and what we serve in the cafeteria? We want to engage people in healthy lifestyle choices, wellness and fitness,” explained Andrea Lutz, Rehab and Fitness Manager.

The hospital’s latest Commit to Fit challenge awarded points for not only exercising but also for incorporating fruits and vegetables into the diet, avoiding sodas and alcohol, increasing consumption of water and eliminating sweets, such as pies and cakes. “The challenge shows that it’s about more than exercising,” Lutz said. “Being team-based makes it easier and helps provide accountability as well as support. The teams that have won think before they eat, which is what we are encouraging people to do,” she added. Businesses in the area have embraced the Commit to Fit program, with banks, grocery stores and schools in several towns joining the effort.



CHCS sponsors runs/walks throughout the year to promote physical activity and fitness.

“When the eight-week challenge is over, some people go back to their bad habits,” Lutz said. “That’s why we do the challenge three times a year. Our next challenge will include getting enough sleep and avoiding fried foods. Sleep has a direct correlation to weight loss; people need seven to eight hours a night, and most people don’t get that much,” she added.

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Commit to Fit Challenge

The Commit to Fit Challenge is an eight-week program in which teams of six compete for prizes while improving their well-being and learning healthier lifestyle habits. After signing the “Commit to Fit” pledge, teams select a fun name, with a \$5 gift card per team member being awarded for Best Team Name. Team members may be employees in one or multiple locations and may include their family and friends.

Each week, the team captain turns in points based on the activities and choices of team members throughout the previous week. Participants earn 1 point for every mile they walk or run, 1 point for each 15 minutes of exercise using different types of equipment (road or stationary bicycle, elliptical, rowing machine, etc.) or doing other types of exercise, such as yoga or Pilates. There was no cap on the number of exercise points that could be earned.

“As the competition went on, some people became dedicated, exercising for one or two hours daily,” Lutz recalled. “Our goal was to follow American Heart Association guidelines for a healthy workout regimen, and to avoid excessive exercise.” In the latest challenge, exercise was capped at five hours per week, with 30-minute increments. Therapists and rehabilitation centers took on more leadership and urged the incorporation of points for eating fruits and vegetables, and abstaining from alcohol.

Points now are earned by nutritional and other lifestyle choices. Participants receive 1 point for every serving of fruit or vegetables consumed daily. Drinking eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day earns a point. Eliminating sugar – no pies/cakes and candy – provides a point per day. Each day without a soda or alcohol is worth one point each. The program uses incentives to encourage healthy choices; there are no penalties.

“We used standards from the American Heart Association in terms of serving sizes of fruits and veggies. We went with existing standards,” Lutz said.

Each team member paid \$5 to participate in the challenge, and there was a 100

percent payout of the fees. Based on the number of teams and on what place the teams achieved, the monetary winnings could be from \$10 to \$50 for each team member. Five dollar gift certificates to Subway were awarded to the six individuals who showed the most improvement.

“The Commit to Fit challenge reinforces that health and wellness are about what you do in terms of nutritional choices, not just exercise,” Lutz said. However, weighing is not part of the program. “This program is about being healthy. It’s how you feel, how you behave. It’s not about a number on the scale. Some people don’t need to lose weight,” she added.

For those who choose to lose weight, the organization also offers L.E.A.N (lifestyle, exercise and nutrition). This weight-loss program focuses on eating habits, exercise instruction and educational topics that address barriers to success.



Modeling Health for the Community

“In last two years since CHCS started the LiveWell journey, fitness and rehab have been doing more,” Lutz said. The fitness centers now offer yoga classes, and CHCS staff teach educational exercise seminars at local community centers.

In 2017, CHCS staged its first triathlon as a collaborative effort among all four fitness centers. CHCS also has helped organize and promote other races, including three memorial races with local businesses for adults and children. In addition, CHCS has created obstacle courses that include a variety of barriers that challenge balance, climbing, running and crawling abilities while participants enjoy getting wet and muddy.

Other fun community events have been created, including trail runs where CHCS distributes branded head and wrist bands, a “glow run” at night with participants wearing glow sticks and branded arm and wrist bands, the annual Turkey Trot at Thanksgiving, the Red/White/Blue run for July 4th and a “color blast” run in which runners are festooned with powder that glows. The 5K and 3K events have “really come alive in the last two years,” with six events being staged in Holton and three in other communities.

“We’re still working on how to more engage the community,” Lutz said. Recently, CHCS has made all of its fitness centers 24/7 and added a “bouncy house” for children to the sponsored farmers’ market. “Kids need to be engaged and getting them active is important, and it gives parents time to look at healthy vegetables and fruit,” she explained.

It’s More Than What You Do ... What You Eat Makes a Difference

For the past two years, the hospital has focused on improving and expanding nutritional options in meals and educating staff and community members about healthier food choices. While the hospital always has been on the “healthier side” in terms of food options for patients, associates and visitors, *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* has encouraged and supported CHCS in making policy changes in vending machine merchandise and modifying the types of foods offered in the cafeteria as well as cooking methods and ingredients used, according to Holly Schmitz, R.D., Nutrition Services Manager. “*Healthy Kansas Hospitals* brought us to the awareness of what we needed to refine, and helped us detail out what we wanted to do moving forward,” Nancy Willert said.

**“I’m proud of our community and the hospital.
I’m proud to see people come together and
make a difference.” — Will Augustyn, Chef**

The LiveWell Committee realized options were not available for a healthier snack, and took action to change the situation. Nancy Willert cites a 12 percent increase in healthier snack options now available in hospital vending machines and cafeterias. Baked chips, fruit, nuts, dark chocolate and meal replacement bars are offered in coffee shops, vending machines and cafeterias at prices comparable to processed foods. In addition, CHCS began posting nutritional facts about items available in vending machines and served on the cafeteria line. “People are more health conscious, and the information we’ve been passing along has been helping them make better decisions. It helps them stop and think about their food choice,” Schmitz said.

Another positive change has been offering a healthy alternative to soda and sugary drinks by providing free infused water in the hospital lobby. Purchasing a water infuser and using fresh fruits, herbs or vegetables to flavor the water was an idea picked up at the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* seminar.

“With more administrative support and a slight budget increase for food, the cafeteria now offers more fresh fruits, more baked fish products and more salad bar options,” Schmitz added. The reaction from staff and visitors has been positive, Schmitz noted, saying, “They really like the fresh fruit and unbreaded fish options.”

Chef Will Augustyn says the hospital kitchen is doing more “from-scratch” cooking and is using more fresh ingredients and herbs. Moving from Kansas City to the rural area, Augustyn has brought many new ideas, and residents have embraced the expanded variety of ingredients and tastes. “On Pie Day, we did a smoked salmon and arugula pizza on a whole wheat crust,” he said. More traditional pizzas were made using a cauliflower crust. In addition, Augustyn has introduced different kinds of fish, like grouper, and topped it with unique salsa flavors, such as mango, strawberry and watermelon.



“We’re enjoying bringing new foods – like different types of fish, herbs and quinoa to our rural area,” Schmitz said. “We’ve helped people realize they shouldn’t be afraid to try new things. We’re getting away from the meat and potatoes stigma,” she added. Augustyn believes his proudest moment was “getting a farmer to try quinoa and seeing the expression on his face. The exposure to different foods that people have not tasted” is satisfying to him. “It’s worth it. To give them that experience without having to leave home.”

“We partnered with Ashlyn Kite-Hartwich of the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) for technical assistance in developing herb and vegetable gardens at our Onaga Campus,” said Nancy Willert. This led to a partnership in developing vegetable gardens at the schools. “Our next project is a community garden,” she added.



Volunteers helped prepare the hospital’s garden for planting in the spring.

Augustyn has used the gardens’ peppers and cilantro to make fresh salsa. Although seasonal, “salsa has been a great asset for our line at lunch,” he said. “People love it. It’s a healthier snack option,” he added.

Garden herbs provide chives for baked potatoes, ingredients for a citrus glaze for turkey, and seasonings for a remoulade sauce served with crab cakes. Fresh garden lettuce is a “big hit” on the salad bar, Augustyn said.

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Modeling Health for the Community

Augustyn and Schmitz are trying to educate associates and the community that you don't have to have a dessert with every meal. Instead, they recommend fresh fruit which is served twice weekly in lieu of traditional cake and pie.

Partnering with Local Businesses/Schools

After joining the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative, CHCS began sponsoring and hosting a farmers' market in collaboration with the Onaga Chamber of Commerce and a local bank. "At each market, we provide healthy/modern/stylish snacks, usually made on the grill. Our food service team is available to answer questions, and we offer recipes and nutrition information on seasonal fruits and vegetables," Nancy Willert said. "Having our chef take produce available and create something with it is a wonderful idea. People often don't know what else they can do with the produce they purchase." Some physicians support the initiative by giving vouchers for farmers' market produce. The hospital has expanded the number of weeks for the farmers' market as well as the types of vendors present because of its popularity.

In addition, CHCS supported a new startup company in neighboring Havensville, Greens and Gills Greenhouse, which is growing microgreens via aquaponics. "We promoted a public sampling at the hospital, have purchased product for use in our cafeteria as well as offering product for sale to our associates," Nancy Willert shared.

Collaboration with the schools was another positive step for CHCS. "We realized that healthy habits should start with children," said Nancy Willert. "We see the obesity epidemic, but we were not sure how to collaborate with the schools," she added. Just as CHCS began to ramp up its involvement in improving health and supporting healthier lifestyle behaviors, Nancy Willert and Schmitz were asked to join the Unified School District 322's Wellness Committee. "The first time [we attended a committee meeting], we brought samples of brownies and other snack items. They loved it. They were impressed that you could transform a brownie using black beans," she recalled. Serving on the USD's Wellness Committee "was a way to begin... they knew they needed help. They needed people on their committee who were already doing things to promote wellness and healthier lifestyles. We are just starting to get the ball rolling with them," she added.



CHCS sponsors a weekly farmers' market for the community. Healthy snacks are provided by the hospital, which also offers recipes and tips on how to use various types of produce.

The CHCS LiveWell Committee helped plan and participate in a community health fair with USD 322. "We served healthy snacks and veggie pizza to participants and provided recipes. We also organized a fitness test for the children and assisted Pottawatomie EMS in blood pressure screening," Nancy Willert explained. CHCS provided healthier snacks – homemade hummus and fresh vegetables at a "back-to-school" night. "We are already discussing activities for 2018-19 that will include our first fitness challenge between the school and hospital," she explained.

Community outreach and education are important components of the LiveWell program. "We partner with schools, senior centers and other CHCS locations to present workshops and events on health-related topics including salt in the diet, diabetes awareness, canning 101, exercise and fall prevention," Nancy Willert said. In addition CHCS promotes healthy lifestyle topics and recipes using email, the hospital newsletter and local newspapers. Each month, CHCS chooses a health topic and educates its service area about it via Facebook, e-newsletters and newspapers, as well as public presentations.

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Nancy Willert, RN, chair of the LiveWell Committee and Education coordinator, talked with a group of students about healthy eating at the Healthy Buffs event at Onaga Public Schools.

FUDGY BLACK BEAN BROWNIES

INGREDIENTS:

- 15-oz. can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips (you can get by with less)



DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and grease an 8x8 pan or glass baking dish.
2. Combine everything in the blender or food processor – except the chocolate chips.
3. Stir in the chocolate chips but keep a few to sprinkle on the top, too.
4. Bake for 20-23 minutes.
5. Remove from the oven and refrigerate for an hour – they are easier to cut that way.

Looking Ahead

The LiveWell Committee continues to grow in numbers each year. CHCS also is engaged with the leadership of USD 322 and meets regularly to plan activities for the benefit of teachers and students.

To enhance support of community lifestyle choices, the CHCS Board of Trustees has authorized the engagement of architects to do a preliminary design of a trail system on 29 acres owned by the hospital, and the system will be working with the City of Onaga on a grant application to start development of this trail system.

“We are passionate about improving health through leading by example,” exclaims Nancy Willert. “It is the right thing to do and we will continue our commitment,” she said.

TIPS/LESSONS LEARNED

Members of the LiveWell Committee offer the following ideas to help others focus on improving the health of staff and community members.

- Get buy-in from administration first, says Holly Schmitz.
- It is a huge undertaking, so find people to help you, Schmitz adds.
- Get a group of people from different departments involved, not just two or three, advises Will Augustyn. It takes a lot of work, and a team of people can work on the initiatives together.
- You need to get physicians involved, advises Andrea Lutz. If physicians reinforce the message through how they speak to patients every day in their practices, it will work.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again, Lutz adds. Realize it is hard to get people engaged. For CHCS, changing the vending machine merchandise has been very difficult.
- Realize that you can only do as much as what people want, and that people have to be willing to make changes, Lutz noted.
- The time and effort are worth it, Chef Augustyn believes. People with knowledge came together and set new standards and created a new direction. People were educated in the process and made a difference in the community.

About Community HealthCare System

CHCS is a nonprofit health care system with a tradition of providing compassionate, high-quality care to the rural communities of northeast Kansas. CHCS's more than 450 associates along with 22 physicians and practitioners serve seven communities in a 10,000-square-mile service area. CHCS includes two hospitals, one in Onaga and the other in St. Marys; seven family practice clinics serving the communities of Corning, Centralia, Frankfort, Onaga, Holton, Westmoreland and St. Marys; two nursing homes and one assisted living facility, Home Health; and four fitness centers. For more information, go to www.chcsks.org.

About Healthy Kansas Hospitals

The *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative was federally funded through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Bureau of Community Health Systems FLEX Program. The Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (FLEX) program is managed by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization existing to be the leading advocate and resource for members. KHA membership includes 217 member facilities, of which 124 are full-service, community hospitals. Founded in 1910, KHA's vision is Optimal Health for Kansas. For more information, go to www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org.

CHCS LiveWell Committee Members

Will Augustyn – Chef
Michele Berendsen – Communications Manager
Michelle Budreau – Respiratory Therapist
Cindy Flentie – Director of Human Resources
Jessica Husman – Occupational Therapist
Roz Lewis – Director of Ancillary Services
Andrea Lutz – Rehab and Fitness Manager
Holly Schmitz – Dietitian and Manager of Nutrition Services
Melissa Talley, Chief Practice Management Officer
Marcia Walsh – Chief Transition Officer, Office of Practice Management
Nancy Willert – Education Coordinator and Committee Chair
Todd Willert – President and CEO
Emily Zutterman – Patient Accounts Representative