

Employee Healthbeat

From the desk of Cassandra DeWitt, formerly Infection Prevention & Employee Health



A stressful pandemic

When providing care to others during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, many health care providers will start to feel more stress, anxiety and other strong emotions. Due to this probable response, health care workers will need to learn to be able to recognize symptoms of stress and start to take steps to build their resilience and cope with it, or be able to ask for help when it is needed. When a health care worker is unable to manage his or her stress or emotions, it could potentially start to affect that person's wellbeing, the care that person gives to others while doing the job and the wellbeing of the other people that person takes care of outside of work.

How are you currently coping with the extra stress of a pandemic? Are you having any of the following symptoms? Symptoms of stress:

- Feeling irritation, anger or denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous or anxious
- Feeling helpless or powerless

- Lacking motivation
 - Feeling tired, overwhelmed, burned out, sad or depressed
 - Having trouble sleeping
 - Having trouble concentrating
- Experiencing or witnessing life threatening or traumatic events affects everyone differently. Not only is recognizing the symptoms of stress important, but even more important is finding healthy and manageable ways to cope with them.

Per the CDC, follow these tips to cope and enhance your resilience to stress:

- Communicate with your coworkers, supervisors and employees about job stress. Talk openly about how the pandemic is affecting your work. Identify factors that cause stress, and work together to identify solutions. Ask about how to access mental health resources in your workplace.
- Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.
- Identify and accept those things which you do not have control over.
- Recognize that you are performing a crucial role in fighting this pandemic and that you are doing the best you can with the resources available.
- Increase your sense of control by keeping a consistent daily routine when possible, ideally one that is similar to your schedule before the pandemic. Try to get adequate sleep. Make time to eat healthy meals. Take breaks during your shift to rest, stretch, or check in with supportive colleagues, coworkers, friends and family.
- When away from work, get exercise when you can. Spend time outdoors either being physically active or relaxing. Do the things that you enjoy when not working.
- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and mentally exhausting, especially when you work with people directly affected by the virus.

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- If you feel you may be misusing alcohol or drugs (including prescriptions), ask for help.
- Engage in mindfulness techniques, such as breathing exercises and meditation.
- If you are being treated for a mental health condition, continue with your treatment.

Mental health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and act. If you feel the stress has gotten to be too much or if the stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row, contact your health care provider. You are a vital part of this organization, this community and your work is invaluable! ●●●

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention contributed to this article, www.cdc.gov

Human Resources

From the desk of Shannan Hempler, human resources

2021 Open Enrollment

NCH will stay with BCBS for our group health insurance in the new year. We did bid out our coverage to United and Aetna for 2021 coverage; however, BCBS still offered a lower renewal rate than the other companies. All of the other supplemental insurance options we offer are staying the same in the new year.

All full-time and part-time employees working 30+ hours per week must arrange to come in and complete the 2021 benefit and pre-tax paperwork or waiver if they are not planning to participate in 2021. Questions may be directed to HR or the HUB representatives.

Wellness benefits on AFLAC and Guardian policies

Don't forget to file your wellness claims on the policies you have with wellness benefits! If you have not had your wellness visit for 2020, act quickly, and see if you can still get an appointment.

Unemployment fraud is on the rise

The rise in unemployment filings and the expansion of jobless benefits in the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have facilitated an explosion of fraud across the country. HR has a responsibility to respond quickly to phony unemployment claims and assist employees whose personal information has been stolen.

"With the broad expansion of unemployment benefits during the pandemic and states racing to get them distributed, fraud was a concern from the outset," said David Fryman, a partner and member of Ballard Spahr's labor and employment group in Philadelphia. "Sure enough, state and federal entities are reporting significantly increased instances of fraudulent claims for unemployment benefits. Across a number of states, employers report receiving notifications of claims for unemployment benefits filed

in the name of individuals who remain employed or employees who left the organization or retired years ago."

The Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act expanded unemployment benefits for people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in several significant ways, including increasing the weekly benefit amount by \$600 through July 31. And even though the additional \$600 is no longer offered, many states are now approved to participate in a \$400 extra unemployment payment program launched August 8 by the Trump administration.

The FBI alerted employers in July about the rise in fraudulent unemployment claims using stolen identity information. "The criminals obtain the stolen identity using a variety of techniques, including the online purchase of stolen personally identifiable information, previous data breaches, computer intrusions, cold-calling victims while using impersonation scams, email phishing schemes, physical theft of data from individuals or third parties, and from public websites and social media accounts, among other methods," the agency said.

The large-scale scams involve filing claims for benefits using the names and personal information of people who have not lost their jobs, said Seena Gressin, an attorney with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) who is focused on identity theft and fraud prevention. "The investigation is ongoing, but this much is known: The fraud is affecting tens of thousands of people, slowing the delivery of benefits to people in real need, and costing states hundreds of millions of dollars," she said. "Most people learn they're affected when they get a notice from their state unemployment benefits office or their employer about their supposed application for benefits. By then, the benefits usually have been paid to an account the criminals control."

The prevalence of reported incidents from every corner of the country is



staggering. Here are just a few of the cases:

- Georgia found more than 130,000 false claims filed in July.
- Illinois identified more than 120,000 counts of unemployment insurance fraud in August.
- Maryland announced 47,000 fraudulent claims had been uncovered in early July.
- Pennsylvania reported that 10,000 prison inmates filed for benefits across the state.

Jan Eckert, HR Director at Bucklin Tractor & Implement Co., an agriculture and farm equipment dealership with locations across Kansas, recently received the third fraudulent unemployment claim among her company's workforce of 200 since the onset of COVID-19.

"I know this is a problem in Kansas, and I understand the same is true in Oklahoma, as well," she said. "I was especially concerned when I received notice of the first two in July. Both involved employees in one location. My first concern was an internal security breach, but in working with our IT department, we could find nothing to indicate our security had been compromised. I also reached out to Paycom, who we use for our HRIS (Human Resource Information System) and payroll functions."

Eckert said the Kansas Department of Labor (KDOL) responded to the first two claims and stopped them. *(Continued on p. 4)*



THANK YOU to all who participated in the "Prescription to Cruise" event to welcome the new medical staff to Norton! It was hosted on Sept. 30th.

From the cruisers, to the Chamber as an event partner, to the awesome businesses that offered deals throughout the night, to KQNK for the live broadcast, to the Norton Christian Church for delivering gift baskets to all of our new providers...the event showcased Norton and the wonderful small town that it is.

It is so exciting to welcome three new doctors - Dr. Gaede, Dr. McKellar and Dr. Neill - and their families to Norton, as well as Gino Salerno, PA-C!

In the Spotlight



September 2020 Employee of the Month - Haley Jones, RN

Her nomination read: "Haley is an excellent nurse and co-worker! She has a great skill set, is compassionate and dedicated, advocates for her patients and ensures the whole patient family is well cared for. Thanks for being an awesome nurse, Haley!"



October 2020 Employee of the Month - Klare Bliss, CIO

Her nomination read: "Klare is efficient and works hard. She is versatile, as she is an RN and knows the IT world of health care. This makes her a great CIO and resource at NCH."



November 2020 Employee of the Month - Valerie Marble, Radiology

Her nomination read: "Valerie is always willing to step up and help promote services in Radiology. She is on the mammography team and helped put together great promotions for Breast Cancer Awareness in October." ●●●

Human Resources

From the desk of Shannan Hempler, human resources

Unemployment fraud is on the rise (from p. 2)

“They also provided helpful information for me to share with the employees, who had apparently been impacted by identity theft,” she said.

The most recent claim, filed August 20, was for a former employee who retired earlier this year “after a long and successful career with the company,” she said. Eckert reported it to KDOL after checking with the former worker, who denied filing it, she said.

Due to the surge in fraudulent unemployment claims, it is important for HR to diligently monitor and confirm the legitimacy of claims, said Rebecca Harris, an attorney in the Boston office of Goulston & Storrs. “Each state has its own process for submitting and processing unemployment claims,” she said.

Eckert said she monitors and responds to the claims her company receives. “For employers who do not monitor claims as closely, a fraudulent claim could end up being successful,” she said.

Harris added that especially for larger employers that have instituted widespread layoffs and furloughs, insurance payments for fraudulent claims may end up being processed alongside those for legitimate claims. “In such cases, employees only learn of the fraud when they themselves

receive a letter approving their claim for unemployment benefits – which they never filed.”

The following are actions employers can take to prevent fraudulent unemployment claims from being paid:

- Be alert. Let employees know about the spike in fraudulent claims and identity theft, and ask them to report fraudulent benefits claims to HR as soon as they learn about them. People should exercise caution to protect against identity theft and pay careful attention to correspondence they receive related to unemployment benefits, especially if they have not applied for those benefits, Fryman at Ballard Spahr said. “Employers should be vigilant in checking their unemployment reports or advising their third-party unemployment claims administrators to do so, to guard against fraudulent claims linked to their unemployment accounts,” he added.

- Notify employees quickly. Harris said that HR should promptly review whether the named applicant for unemployment benefits is a current or former employee. “If it is a current employee, then the claim is likely fraudulent,” she said. “If it is a former employee, the employer should contact the former employee to confirm whether the individual filed a claim for unemployment benefits.”

- Report the fraud. Both HR and the affected employee should work together to quickly notify both the state unemployment

benefits agency and local police department of the fraud. The U.S. Department of Labor provides employers with resources on how to report unemployment fraud in each state (<https://www.dol.gov/general/maps/fraud>).

- Address identity theft. “The filing of

a fraudulent unemployment claim is a sign that an employee’s sensitive personal information is available to criminals,” said Brandon Archuleta, an attorney in the Seattle office of Lane Powell. He advised employers to direct employees to file a report with the FTC, notify the major credit bureaus, review their credit report, request fraud alerts or a credit freeze, and take steps to ensure that their personal information is not used to commit additional fraud. The FTC’s Gressin suggested employees visit www.identitytheft.gov to report the crime to the FTC and get step-by-step recovery help.

- Review IT security. Archuleta also recommended that employers consult with their IT department to confirm that databases containing employee information have not been compromised.

NCH Human Resource response

Emails are received from the Kansas Department of Labor notifying HR that an unemployment claim has been filed and needs a response online. These emails are received for any current or former employees from the last 18 months. Mailings have been received for individuals who have never been employed by NCH.

- Shannan Hempler reports back to the KDOL the same day in two ways: emails the fraud email address for the KDOL and responds on the online claim that it is fraudulent. The mailed claims are completed as fraud and mailed back as well as having the names emailed to the fraud email address.

- Shannan Hempler notifies the employee by email with all of the instructions from the Kansas Department of Labor’s website.

NCH has received the following fraudulent claims:

- 19 claims on current employees
- 6 claims on individuals who never worked for NCH
- 2 claims on past employees who HR could not reach to verify fraud

NCH offers an identity protection coverage called IDShield. We have participated with this company for several years. Information is available at open enrollment; however, this is not a tax deferred insurance and can be applied for at any time of year. (Continued on p. 5)





Unemployment fraud is on the rise (from p. 4)

Shannan also spoke to the IDShield representative, and he said that since we offer this protection as a group plan, if an employee has already been affected by recent identify theft, he or she could still sign up and get assistance with the current matter and have future protection. Contact NCH Human Resources for information.

National Caregivers Month

November was National Caregivers Month, a time to recognize, support and empower family caregivers. One of the most comprehensive sources of help is www.caregiver.org, the website of the Family Caregiver Alliance. It is an online service that provides quality information, support, and resources for family caregivers of adults with chronic physical or cognitive conditions such as Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's and other illnesses.

Sixty-eight percent of caregivers are women (aarp.org) who spend an average of 20 hours per week caring for a loved one. Whether you are a caregiver or in a relationship with a caregiver, do you know the signs and symptoms of caregiver

physical problems. These symptoms can also give way to burnout.

Caregivers need physical help with tasks, decisions, meal prep, errands and chores. They especially need emotional support to help them deal with the stress of caring for an elderly person or other loved one with special needs. Most people do not know that caregiving is one of the toughest and most stressful jobs. This is because it is characterized by high levels of "job strain." Job strain includes having high levels of stress with low levels of control over how much, how often and when caregiving will next be required.

Source: www.unhealthywork.org/job-strain/definitions-andformulations-of-job-strain/

Using anti-anxiety medications?

Google reports that searches for "anxiety" and "panic attacks" have skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to CNN. Have you experienced anxiety and panic symptoms in the past year? Although anxiety and panic attacks don't always require medication, benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, Klonopin, Ambien, etc.) are

From the desk of Shannan Hempler, human resources

Human Resources

distress? These symptoms may include feeling overwhelmed or constantly worried, feeling tired often, getting too much sleep or not enough sleep, gaining or losing weight, becoming easily irritated or angry, losing interest in activities you used to enjoy, feeling sad, having frequent headaches, bodily pain or other

the class of drugs often prescribed for this condition. Work closely with your health care provider if these medications are offered to you. Unmanaged, they can leave you dependent (addicted), and willpower will have no preventative effect. Improperly managed, withdrawal from benzos can be dangerous, too—even more so than heroin. The older you are, the greater the risk of injuries and accidents while using benzos. If you're starting to take a benzodiazepine, begin with the end in mind. These drugs are not meant for long-term use. Consider psychotherapeutic help in tandem with medication to boost your gains.

Source: www.nih.gov [search "despite risk benzodiazepine use"]

Mark your calendar!

The next Blood Drive at Norton County Hospital is scheduled Jan. 8, 2021.

Employee milestones

September

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Sara Smith | 13 |
| Alan Brown | 6 |
| Aaron Kuehn | 6 |
| Brooke Crawford | 1 |
| Whitney Winder | 1 |

October

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Kristin Vogel | 13 |
| Travis Nykamp | 6 |
| Gina Frack | 5 |
| Carolyn Long | 5 |
| Sarah Mohr | 3 |
| Todd Boller | 2 |
| Kayla Broeckelman | 2 |
| Mitch Pugh | 1 |

November

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| Eva Harrington | 22 |
| Shawnee Branek | 19 |
| Tracey Hartzog | 8 |
| Rita Conrad | 6 |
| Natasha Schmidt | 3 |
| Kelsee Hildebrand | 1 ●●● |

Meet the Team!

Norton County Hospital Human Resources is pleased to announce our new employees. Please say hello, and welcome them!

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p><u>Sabrina Bagley</u></p> <p><i>Environmental Services – Full Time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team August 31, 2020.</p> <p>Sabrina grew up in Chanute, Kansas. She has obtained some Childcare Certificates and CPR. Sabrina enjoys playing Pokemon 20 and playing with her two cats.</p> <p>When asked why she chose to seek employment at NCH: “I like to work in a rewarding environment.”</p> |
|  | <p><u>Nina Soriano</u></p> <p><i>Nursing – LPN – PRN</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team August 31, 2020.</p> <p>Nina grew up in Cheyenne, Wyoming. She is an IV-Certified LPN. She is married with three children: 7-year-old son, 4-year-old daughter and 1-year-old daughter.</p> <p>She enjoys spending time with family, board games, movies and crocheting.</p> <p>When asked why she chose to seek employment at NCH: “I always loved the friendly atmosphere here.”</p> |
|  | <p><u>Chelsea Stagemeyer</u></p> <p><i>Occupational Therapist – Part Time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team August 25, 2020.</p> <p>Chelsea grew up in Arapahoe, Nebraska. She received both her Bachelors of Rehabilitation Studies and Masters of Occupational Therapy from the College of Saint Mary. She enjoys spending time with family, friends her puppy Willow and golfing.</p> <p>When asked why she chose to seek employment at NCH: “To continue to give back to rural communities with my OT skills and passion.”</p> |

Meet the Team!



Kristen Brands

Grant Coordinator – Part Time

Joined the NCH Team September 9, 2020.

Kristen grew up in Almena, Kansas. She went to KU and received a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Bachelor of Science in (Magazine) Journalism. She has been married to her husband, Glenn, for 23 years. They have two children, both sophomores, in college and high school.

When asked why she chose to seek employment at NCH: “The ‘grant coordinator’ position seemed to match my skill set and interests me in terms of bringing healthy programming/projects to our community.”



Sarah Richmeier

Clinic Aide – Full Time

Joined the NCH Team September 10, 2020.

Sarah grew up in Cozad, Nebraska. She went on to complete some college courses. Her parents are divorced, and she was raised by a wonderful woman. She has two older brothers and has two nephews and a niece. She got married on March 16, 2019, and is ready to start their family. She enjoys playing board games and card games, baking, spending time with friends and family, and watching movies.

When asked why she chose to seek employment at NCH: “My boyfriend, now husband, is the reason I moved here to Norton about five years ago.”



Pam Besperat

Nursing – CNA – Full Time Nights

Joined the NCH Team October 27, 2020.

Pam grew up in a small town called Woodston, Kansas. She is a certified CNA and is currently taking pre-requisites for her LPN. She is recently divorced and has two teenage boys.

When asked why she chose to seek employment at NCH: “It’s always been my dream to work in a hospital and eventually in the OR and ER departments.”

In the News

From the desk of Katie Allen Wagner, communications and foundation

Norton County Hospital recognized in statewide competition

Kansas hospitals and health systems were recently recognized for excellence in public relations and marketing efforts by the Kansas Association of Health Care Communicators (KAHCC) through its Emerald Awards competition.

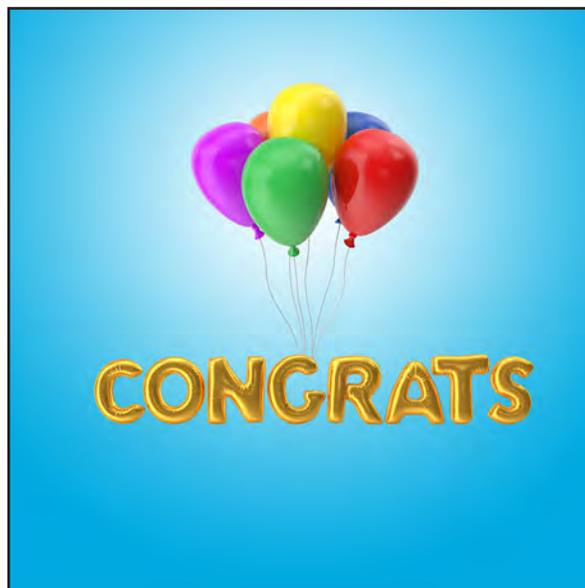
Emerald Awards are given annually to Kansas hospitals and health systems that excel in internal communications, external communications, special events, advertising and other categories. Three marketing professionals from Georgia with extensive experience in health care marketing evaluated this year's 54 entries for planning and research, implementation, cost effectiveness and results.

The 2020 Emerald Awards were presented at the KAHCC Virtual Fall Conference on Sept. 11. Norton County Hospital was awarded two Emerald Awards in the following categories:

- External Communications – Other Publication: “Norton County Relocation Guide,” a collaboration among the Norton County Hospital, Norton Area Chamber of Commerce and Norton City/County Economic Development, designed by Katie Allen
- Writing: “Hospital Welcomes New Physicians,” by Katie Allen

In addition to the two Emerald Awards, the hospital received a Certificate of Merit in the External Communications – Annual Report category for its “Foundation Annual Report.” Katie Allen, Norton County Hospital's communications director and the executive director of the Norton Regional Health Foundation, accepted these awards.

The KAHCC is a group of health care communications professionals dedicated to improving communication with our communities, health care employees, physicians, media and more. ●●●



Celebrating staff sonographers during Medical Ultrasound Awareness Month

Norton County Hospital recognized the important role that diagnostic medical sonographers play in the medical field during Medical Ultrasound Awareness Month, which is celebrated annually during October.

Ultrasound is a type of medical imaging that uses high-frequency sound waves to look inside the body. The technology was discovered in the 1820s and first used in modern medicine in 1942. Ultrasound equipment and the technologists who run the machines play an instrumental role in providing high-quality patient care.

Sonographers – also called ultrasound technologists – use ultrasound machines to view images of the beating heart, fetal growth, blood vessels and more. In fact, ultrasound is applied in many clinical settings, especially radiology, obstetrics and gynecology, and cardiology, and it is growing in specialty areas, such as anesthesiology and oncology. Additionally, ultrasound is growing faster than other medical imaging exams, such as CT or MRI. Some reasons are because ultrasound is easy to use and low-cost.

Ultrasound machines are safe, patient-friendly, and can now be as small as smartphones or tablets. Because they're so portable, ultrasound systems are often the exam of choice, for instance, to diagnose a patient with a physical disability or when a rapid finding is needed in the emergency room.

Sonographers should be commended for their technical and detailed work that supports improved patient care and outcomes. Ultrasound staff members at Norton County Hospital include (above, L-R) Marla Kuhn and Shawnee Branek. These staff members do ultrasound work on-site at the hospital and using a mobile ultrasound unit. ●●●



CEO Update

From the desk of Gina Frack, Hospital CEO

COVID continues to change how we are able to do some things, but we continue to find ways around the limitations. Rather than having our full leadership meetings or the bi-annual all-staff meetings in person these newsletter updates will serve as a way to keep you all informed of things happening across the organization.

Ni2 is a company we have been in contract with to help identify areas to refine our revenue cycle. Ni2 has already helped save us thousands on new equipment purchases by negotiating lower bids (e.g., \$20,000 saved on a software quote). The Ni2 representatives are currently working with Lana Jones to augment the work she does with Chronic Care Management. Their current focus is to get more eligible patients signed up for the services and to be proactive with Medicare patients to get their annual wellness visits done at Norton Medical Clinic. Ni2 will also be overseeing price transparency requirements that will go into effect January 1, 2021. Ni2 will also be taking over management and updates to our charge master. They will be reaching out to department heads for input, training and ongoing updates. More to come.

The Master Facilities Plan (MFP) is currently underway. This plan correlates to an organization's overall strategic plan. Simply said, what services we provide determines what we need from the structure we work within = form follows function. Our building is quite old with a history of additions and/or remodels to address specific needs. A MFP is a missing piece of our organization's business plan as well.

Health Facilities Group from Wichita is leading this project. Rather than going to 100 percent on architectural drawings as had been done in the past, we chose this route to spend the least money, but acquire the information we need to help make decisions moving forward. We need to have a general idea of what we need in layout and square footage for services as well as the total cost estimates. Thank you to the numerous staff from across the organization who have given input on what is lacking in our current building and what we see as areas of growth for our hospital/clinic in the years to come. The timeline for when the final report will be completed has been pushed back to January 2021.

The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is due again in 2021. The current plan was for 2018-2020. Those three years went by fast! As a reminder, the CHNA was done in conjunction with our current strategic and implementation plan. We plan to work with Wichita State University again. God willing, we will be able to get past the limitations created by COVID and again get out to the community for meetings and gather citizen input as we update these important guiding documents.

Students and more students! As a part of our commitment to recruitment and retention of staffing, we are focusing on supporting student learning at our facility. Due to some current college affiliations, we have supported PA students, medical students, lab students, nursing students and rehab students. If your department has a local young person interested in just doing



a day or two of shadowing to learn more about your department, be sure to reach out to HR and Employee Health to find out what is required beforehand. Supporting students in learning more about positions in health care often pays off with those same young people coming back to our facility for a position.

Considering how competitive the labor market is generally and more specifically for health care positions, NCH decided to start working with Caren Bachman to help us recruit staff for our organization. Caren lives in Salina and previously worked as a recruiter for the Smoky Hill Family Medicine Residency. This is the same residency where Dr. Neill and Dr. McKellar received their training. I, too, first came to know Caren while traveling across Kansas to recruit doctors. With all of Caren's networking relationships with colleges across the Midwest and her passion for recruiting, we are trying something new to assist us to fill positions. Likely you will see her around the facility more as she will be onsite to better learn our needs, meet with departments and learn more about our community/region.

Thanks to you all, and Happy Holidays! ●●●

In the News

From the desk of Katie Allen Wagner, communications and foundation

Stagemeyer provides occupational therapy services at Norton County Hospital

Norton County Hospital welcomed a new occupational therapist to its staff in August 2020. Chelsea Stagemeyer (pictured at right), OTR/L, has a bachelor's degree in rehabilitation studies from the College of Saint Mary, Omaha, Nebraska, and a master's degree of occupational therapy also from the College of Saint Mary.

Stagemeyer's past experiences include working in a skilled nursing facility in Lincoln, Nebraska, and at Cozad Community Hospital in inpatient, outpatient and home health care settings. At Norton County Hospital, she provides occupational therapy services to outpatients, as well as hospital inpatients in acute, skilled and intermediate levels.

According to Stagemeyer, occupational therapy helps increase a person's participation and independence in daily activities. Occupational therapists assist people of all ages; patients are seen for evaluation and establishment of a plan of care, which can include exercise programs for post-surgical, muscle weakness and other upper extremity injuries. It can also include assistance for pain control and manual therapy for soft-tissue mobilization.

Other areas that occupational therapy can address are fine motor coordination skills, pediatric therapy, fall prevention and home modification education, and wheelchair evaluations. Stagemeyer can even create custom orthotic splints for hand and wrist injuries.

"I enjoy focusing on increasing people's independence with daily living tasks, and I have really grown to love helping people who have hand and wrist injuries," Stagemeyer said.

When not working at the hospital, Stagemeyer said she loves spending time with her nieces, her boyfriend, Matthew, and puppy, Willow. She also enjoys golfing and going to concerts. Stagemeyer grew up in Arapahoe, Nebraska, and currently lives in Alma, Nebraska.

Occupational therapy services at Norton

County Hospital can be obtained with a physician order and by calling the Rehabilitation department to schedule at 785-874-2222. ●●●

Norton County health entities release latest information on county COVID-19 spread

October brought a lot of local changes related to an uptick in positive COVID-19 cases in Norton County. Due to the increased number of cases, Norton County Hospital and Medical Clinic and the Norton County Health Department encouraged the public to increase personal awareness and precautions.

To mitigate COVID-19 positive cases and protect the health care workforce and necessary supplies, Norton County residents have been asked to consider the following:

- Health care staff and other essential personnel in the county may not be able to work due to isolation and quarantine requirements. Staff shortages are possible, and we need to work to keep ourselves and the health care workforce healthy.
- It's a possibility that larger area hospitals could fill up and not accept transfers from smaller rural hospitals. This is a main reason to remain vigilant with protective procedures against the virus.
- The hospital may need to make quick changes to its visiting policies and the allowance of elective (non-emergent) procedures as the local COVID-19 environment changes. As of 9 p.m. on Oct. 16, 2020, no visitors have been allowed in the hospital and clinic facilities. There are exceptions to this; for example, one



visitor serving as a guardian to a minor child or advocate for a patient with certain specific needs may be allowed. It must be the same visitor per patient under these circumstances (no swapping people as the one visitor). There are also exceptions for end-of-life circumstances (two visitors per patient at any given time). All people in the facilities must wear a mask at all times and adhere to social distancing guidelines.

- Please remember, if you are a patient in need of medical attention, do not wait. Make an appointment at the clinic or visit the Emergency department as needed; some medical needs beyond COVID-19 cannot wait. Also, please bring a mask to the hospital and clinic facilities to help preserve the supply. If you use a cloth mask provided by the hospital, please be sure to return it to the labeled receptacles at the exits to be laundered and reused.

Here are some ways to take appropriate precautions:

- Make community health a top priority. Wearing a mask protects the people around you by trapping droplets that are released when talking, coughing or sneezing. Protection increases when all people wear masks. Also, practice social distancing and washing hands. (Continued on p. 11)

In the News

From the desk of Katie Allen Wagner, communications and foundation

Latest information on county COVID-19 spread (from p. 10)

- The virus that causes COVID-19 has been asymptomatic in some people. And, someone who begins having symptoms could have been shedding the virus before symptoms start. This means if you test positive, anyone you have been in contact with would potentially need to quarantine.
- If you are gathering indoors with people from outside your household, you could be at high risk for either contracting or transmitting the virus. Large gatherings at this time are discouraged, but if you attend a large event, it is recommended to mask, social distance and wash hands frequently.
- If you suspect you have COVID-19, it is important to call before arriving at the clinic (785-877-3305), or tell dispatch. COVID-suspecting patients can quickly infect health care workers and other staff to cause more staff shortages.

• Get your flu vaccine! Influenza season is upon us. Getting the influenza vaccine protects you, those around you and the health care workforce by keeping us all healthy and preserving supplies. Contact the health department or your provider about getting this important vaccine.

Please make the effort to help one another, so we can get through this in the best way possible. Thank you all for your efforts. ●●●

Norton County Hospital eases community COVID-19 concerns through video series

Norton County experienced a significant surge in COVID-19 cases throughout October and November. Norton County Hospital brought back its an online video series, called "Ask the Doc" to help address public questions and concerns.

This series was featured by *KSN News*. Those interviewed included Rose Garrison and Megan Keiswetter, Norton community members; Katie Allen, hospital community relations director; and Dr. Josh Gaede (pictured at right).

Community members have been asked submit COVID-related questions and concerns to the Norton County Hospital's Facebook page. Those questions are then asked of one of the hospital's doctors in the video series. Thus far, Dr. Maurer and Dr. Gaede have answered public questions. Thank you for your valuable feedback for the community! ●●●

(Note: You can find the video series on the hospital's Facebook page. The full article and video news story by KSN was published on Nov. 10, 2020. It can be accessed online.)

Other news outlets

In addition to KSN News, Norton County Hospital was also asked to provide information for the following national and regional news outlets: *The New York Times*, *Fierce Healthcare*, *NBC News* and *KWCH News*. ●●●



Celebrations

PT Month in October

October is Physical Therapy Month! We are proud of our team at Norton County Hospital. They work hard to help patients of all ages, and in inpatient and outpatient settings, meet physical activity goals and improve their quality of life!

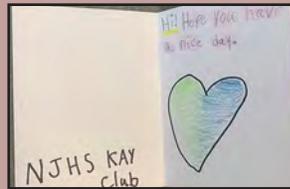
Pictured L-R are Kellen Jacobs, Cortney Crocker, Chelsea Stagemeyer (Occupational Therapy), Marissa Schamberger, Brooke Crawford, Monica Hembd and Spencer Shirk.



So many to thank!

This fall, we had some yummy treats sent to us from amazing local people, businesses and other hospitals in our great state. There's no denying that our staff members have been busier than normal, and many of us are worn out. But, we always live by our mission to provide an exceptional experience for patients and staff. Thank you to those who take care of us....so we can take care of our community! To the NJHS KAY Club - Thank you for the nice care packages for our staff. Your kindness is SO appreciated! Also, a special thanks to Nuts.com for generously thinking of our health care staff. What a nice and unexpected surprise that will be enjoyed by many!

Additionally, our hospital received a donation of training equipment. We are so thankful to the donor, Jonnie Vanderhoef, who happens to be the father of one of our nurses, Julia Thompson! We appreciate this donation to help our staff.



More celebrations in September and October

September brings National Healthcare Environmental Services Week! We want to give a big shout out to our amazing staff. Pictured L-R (bottom left) are Ryan, Alan, Josie, Sabrina, Cheryl and Eva. We also want to recognize Adam, who will be on a yearlong deployment and celebrated his last day with us.

Happy Emergency Nurses Week, which was in October, to our own wonderful nurses and all the nurses who help patients and save lives globally!

We wore our PINK (two center photos) to raise awareness of breast cancer and the importance of mammography for early detection. Ask your health care provider if it's time for a mammogram. Together, we can save lives!

October was also the month for National Health Care Food Service Week! Our Dietary department keeps us happy and fed! Honestly, we can count on them to provide a joke or laugh with every great meal. Pictured L-R (bottom right) are Jordan Brown, Shaelin Beckstrom, Mary Boyce, Rita Conrad, Chanelle Andrews, Carol Richmeier, Brenda Dole and Jeanne Pharis. Not pictured are Jean Carmichael and Lauryn Schumaker.

October also allowed us to celebrate Engineering Week and Health Care Supply Chain Week! A special thanks to Ty Bruton, Mitch Pugh and Dan Dole, as well as Pam Miller!



Celebrations

Recognizing rural

Nov. 19 was National Rural Health Clinic Day! Here's a shout out to our Norton Medical Clinic! Rural communities are wonderful places to live and work, which is why approximately 57 million people – one in five Americans – call them home! These rural communities also have unique health care needs. National Rural Health Day is an opportunity to celebrate the "Power of Rural." The day brings to light the unique health care challenges that rural citizens face and showcases the efforts of rural health care providers, State Offices of Rural Health and other rural stakeholders to address those challenges.



National Radiologic Technology Week

National Radiologic Technology Week was celebrated in November! Here's a huge shout out to our Radiology staff. Thank you for all of your great work!

National Radiologic Technology Week is celebrated annually to recognize the vital work of techs across the nation. The celebration takes place during the week of Nov. 8 to commemorate the discovery of the x-ray by Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen on Nov. 8, 1895.

Staff include: Morgan Griffey, Valerie Marble, Allison McChesney, Todd Boller, Shawnee Branek, Mitch Bartels, Ryan Bainter and Marla Kuhn.

Labor & Delivery is back!

Norton County Hospital is pleased to offer Labor & Delivery services again! Patients can make an appointment at Norton Medical Clinic with any of our doctors! Our doctors are trained in obstetrics and are ready to serve the community. Call Norton Medical Clinic to schedule an appointment at 785-877-3305.



Happy Nurse Practitioner Week!

Happy National Nurse Practitioner Week (celebrated in November) to our own Jonna Inman, APRN! National Nurse Practitioner Week is held annually to celebrate exceptional health care providers. The U.S. has more than 290,000 licensed NPs who have 1 billion patient visits to NPs each year!

Thanks for all of your dedicated work, Jonna!



Happy Respiratory Care Week!

Respiratory Care Week was celebrated the end of October! Thanks to Tracy and Kayla for all they do for our patients!



Time for a cookout!

Thanks to our Engineering and Dietary departments in grilling up and preparing some yummy food for our staff! We all needed a "pick me up" with all the long hours many have been putting in for months!

A special thanks also to Jill, Jean Ann and Randa from the Hospital Board who helped serve lunch on a warm but windy November day!



Celebrations

PA Week in October

National Physician Assistant (PA) Week, which is observed annually from Oct. 6 to 12, salutes the more than 90,000 clinically practicing PAs in the United States for their dedication to the delivery of superior patient care. We want to recognize our own Kristin Vogel, PA-C, and Gino Salerno, PA-C! Thank you for your commitment to the health and wellbeing of your patients.



New commercial

A video shoot at the hospital goes well when you have great subjects (many of whom are not included in these pictures)! This was a fun project, and our new NCH commercial can be viewed on our website. You will likely see it running on cable and on-demand television.



Patient Portal – there’s an app for that

Are you signed up for our Patient Portal? With Patient Portal, you can view test results and recent medical records at the click of a button. It now includes an app! Instructions for the app are located on the Patient Portal page of the NCH website.

YOUR HEALTH IS IMPORTANT. AND NOW IT'S MOBILE.

INTRODUCING THE MYCARECORNER MOBILE APP

Now there's a mobile version of MyCareCorner that gives you access to your personal health records, including appointments, current medication list, allergies and more — from anywhere with internet access. You'll get all the benefits of the MyCareCorner patient portal, with additional conveniences.

- Empowered:** Having real time access to your health data and to your care team means you're more actively involved in your own healthcare
- Healthy:** Having the ability to easily stay in (digital) touch with your doctors and other clinical staff from anywhere, at any time via a mobile device, means staying on top of appointments, test results, immunizations and more, which helps improve care outcomes
- Secure:** Just like the desktop version, the app is built on a secure platform
- Collaborative:** If you so choose, family members and other care givers can access your health record. They can simply sign into the mobile app with their current credentials, after access has been shared.

- FEATURES INCLUDE:**
- Allergies
 - Appointments
 - Blood Glucose
 - Blood Oxygen
 - Height
 - Immunizations
 - Medical Conditions
 - Medications
 - Medical Visits and Encounters
 - Procedures
 - Weight Values
 - Vital Signs
 - Messaging
 - Lab Results
 - Documents

Like the desktop version, you can access your personal health records from hospitals, clinics and specialty care, now more conveniently than ever.

DOWNLOAD THE MYCARECORNER APP WITH THESE EASY STEPS:

- 1.) Once you receive an email to join MyCareCorner, click the link in the email to create your account.
- 2.) After creating an account, download MyCareCorner from your App Store or Google Play Store.
- 3.) Now that the MyCareCorner app is downloaded on your phone, log in with the account you just created so you can have any time access to your record.
- 4.) You will be prompted to create a 4-digit pin for simple sign-in in the future.

Download MyCareCorner in your app store

Engage the Community

Norton County Hospital's 'Seat Check Saturday' helped keep kids safe

The National Car Seat Check event at Norton County Hospital, hosted on Sept. 26th, was a success, according to Klare Bliss, a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician at the hospital. There were 10 car seats inspected by the technicians, who included Bliss and Dan Dole. They provided hands-on education to all parents and caregivers in attendance to make sure their car seats were installed and being used correctly. Parents were also reminded to register their car seats with their manufacturers to be notified of recalls.

"Every parent and caregiver walked away with vital information about keeping their children safe," Bliss said. "By coming to National Seat Check Saturday and having their car seats checked by certified technicians, parents were able to gain greater peace of mind about their children riding securely on every trip. Now those parents and caregivers know that their kids are as safe as possible in the event of a crash."

She added that far too many car seats are being used or installed incorrectly, despite kids' safety being a top priority for families.

The free event (photos at right) was Norton County Hospital's way of participating in Child Passenger Safety Week, Sept. 20-26.

Bliss said that parents and caregivers should follow the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) car seat recommendations at www.nhtsa.gov/therightseat to keep children in the right types of car seats (rear-facing car seat, forward-facing car seat with the tether or booster seat) or seat belt for their ages and sizes. Children are often moved to the front seat too soon, which exposes them to increased risk in a crash.

NHTSA reminds parents and caregivers that the safest place for all kids under age 13 years is in the back seat of the car. According to NHTSA data, in 2015, more than 25 percent of children ages 4 to 7 years were prematurely moved to seat belts, when they should have been riding in booster seats. Statistically, in the event of a crash, children are more likely to get injured or killed while in the front seat, even while buckled up. Vehicle seat belts are designed for adult occupants and generally do not fit young children properly.

"Parents don't have to wait for the next National Seat Check Saturday to make sure their car seats are installed properly," Bliss noted. "Parents and caregivers can call 785-877-2226 to make an appointment." ●●●



Falls prevention

Stepping On was able to begin in September, but the program was postponed in October due to COVID-19 and visiting restrictions at the hospital. Participants learned about exercises to help build strength and stability and lessen their fall risk (photo at right). The Norton County Community Foundation funded hand weights for participants through a grant. The Norton Regional Health Foundation is also supporting program expenses. ●●●



Amazon Smile continues to benefit Norton Regional Health Foundation

Make a difference this holiday! If you shop for some of your gifts on Amazon, consider using Amazon Smile, smile.amazon.com/ch/81-2176778, to generate donations for Norton Regional Health Foundation! Let Amazon donate on your behalf to support local health care in Norton County. ●●●

Engage the Community

Community-wide health and wellness

Live Well Norton embarks on 'Pathways to a Healthy Kansas' initiative for Norton County.

By Kristen Brands, Pathways to a Healthy Kansas grant coordinator at NCH

This past July, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS) announced that the local group Live Well Norton was the recipient of the second phase of a *Pathways to a Healthy Kansas* initiative.

Norton County – along with 23 other communities/counties in Kansas – joins 12 returning communities that were selected in the first phase of grants for *Pathways*, the largest community grant program ever funded by BCBSKS. Since the initiative began in 2016, BCBSKS has donated more than \$11.7 million in grant assistance to Kansas communities. The *Pathways* program was created to inspire long-lasting, community-wide health and wellness in these communities.

If the *Pathways* grant initiative could be compared to a “whole-body of wellness” as a metaphor, then Live Well Norton could be considered the operating “arm” of Norton County’s grant. Add to that arm, the operating “brains,” and that is where Katie Allen Wagner, Norton Regional Health Foundation executive director and Norton County Hospital community relations director comes into the “whole-body of wellness” analogy. Wagner oversaw the *Pathways* application process, as she completed and submitted Live Well Norton’s grant application packet – securing that Norton County will receive the pledged \$200,000 from BCBSKS over the next four years of the grant period.

“How it works is \$50,000 will be awarded to Live Well Norton each year from 2020 to 2024,” Wagner said. “These funds are to be used to pay for the coordination aspect of the grant. As we work over the next four years, Live Well Norton may apply for additional implementation grant funding as well. The implementation grant fund opportunities, combined with the coordination grant funds of \$200,000, equal \$500,000 total in eligible grant funding. Thank you to *Pathways* organizers for this amazing opportunity to improve health in Norton County and other areas of Kansas.”

Wagner said the coordination funds also allowed for the hiring of a grant coordinator, Kristen Brands, who began her role at Norton County Hospital in September 2020. Brands oversees the *Pathways* work and the necessary reporting.

When a “whole body of wellness” needs a strong, beating heart, enter Norton County Hospital CEO Gina Frack to fill that role. In 2012, Frack led the effort to establish the Live Well Norton coalition, while she served as administrator of the Norton County Health Department. Both the Norton County Health Department and Norton Area Chamber of Commerce identified silo efforts across the county trying to randomly address much more complex and intertwined issues that repeatedly kept arising as “root issues” for health. These roots were all related to policies, systems and the environment, and Live Well Norton aimed to help fix the issues.

In working with Wichita State University’s Community Engagement Institute and WorkWell KS, Live Well Norton addressed collective impact questions to lay out important foundational bricks and eventually define the coalition’s mission: “We believe that health is wealth for our economy and our quality of life.”

Live Well Norton applied for *Pathways* funding in 2016 but was not awarded the grant at that time. Since the initial *Pathways* grant recipient announcement for Phase Two in July 2020, Live Well Norton members have collaboratively worked with BCBSKS, Wichita State University’s Community Engagement Institute, The Public Health Law Center and the Kanas Health Institute to form three required plans for the first grant action period of the initiative. The three plans include: Local Action Plan, Local Evaluation Plan and Local Communications Plan. These three plans will set the framework for Live Well Norton members to choose six *Pathways* packages that align with Norton County’s goals - in terms of achieving overall health - within the grant cycle.

In the age of COVID-19, collaboration has been a challenge. Like all of you, Live Well Norton members have had to communicate virtually through calls, emails and Zoom meetings, to frame these three *Pathways* plans. The adage, “Is the right arm talking to the left arm?” has never been more relevant. In achieving that overall, metaphorical goal of “whole-body of wellness,” Live Well Norton strives to meet that challenge moving forward.

In the months to come, look for the #BCBSKSPathways on traditional and social media sites in Norton County. The hashtag has been developed to educate, explain and promote the *Pathways to a Healthy Kansas* initiative(s) being accomplished in your area.

Current Live Well Norton members include: Gina Frack, Karen Griffiths, Leslie Pfannenstiel, Rita Speer, Bill Johnson, Gail Roy and Chad Manning. ●●●

