Community Connections

5 Ways to Prevent Diabetes
5 Ways to Protect Your Teen
5 Ways to Stop Your Baby’s Crying

Things Not to Do With Your Hospital Bill

Munson Healthcare Partners:
- Kalkaska Memorial Health Center**
- Mercy Hospital Cadillac***
- Mercy Hospital Grayling***
- Munson Medical Center*
- Otsego Memorial Hospital***
- Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital*
- West Shore Medical Center***
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Every Day

Affordable, accessible, high quality health care is a serious challenge in America. The Munson Healthcare System – a group of seven owned, managed, and affiliated hospitals – is addressing community health needs head on, in a proactive way, every day.

As a group of mission-driven, non-profit organizations, it is our purpose and privilege to provide outstanding care to everyone who needs it. The Munson Healthcare System contributed $47.2 million last year in health care programs and education, as well as free, discounted, and un-reimbursed services.

On the following pages, you will learn about some of the ways Munson Healthcare demonstrates its commitment to you and the communities it serves, every day.

Last year, a record number of Munson Healthcare patients qualified for charity care.

Every day, an average of 20 low-income patients receive free hospital care at Munson Medical Center for medically necessary treatment.

Within two years, Michigan is expected to have a shortage of 900 physicians.

Every day, Munson Healthcare helps new physicians gain the experience they need to launch their own practices in northern Michigan communities, guaranteeing more people in our region will have access to a physician's services.

Today, an estimated 25,450 people in our 11-county area have diabetes, making it the epidemic of our times.

Every day, people with chronic disease such as diabetes and heart failure are being monitored, educated, and cared for by dedicated health care professionals who help them enjoy the best quality of life possible. Hospitals in the Munson Healthcare System are leading a 10-year initiative to reduce the incidence of diabetes in northern Michigan.
Let’s Get Moving Northern Michigan received the 2007 Ludwig Community Benefit Award by the Michigan Health and Hospital Association (MHA).

Let’s Get Moving promotes physical activity, nutrition, and smoking cessation. Last year, 6,723 people in northern Michigan logged nearly 1.4 million miles.

“Through the leadership of this group, northern Michigan communities are battling obesity and cardiovascular disease over the long haul,” the MHA stated.

The award was presented to the North Central Council of MHA and its member hospitals, including Munson Medical Center, Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, Kalkaska Memorial Health Center, Mercy Hospital Cadillac, and Otsego Memorial Hospital.
Sometimes getting better is a lot more complicated than just seeing a physician or taking two aspirin – and a lot more expensive.

That can be a serious problem for people who can’t afford prescription medicine.

Last year, the MEDS (Medication Assistance and Delivery Service) program at Munson Medical Center helped 1,320 patients obtain 5,019 prescriptions with a retail value of $633,390.

Through the MEDS program, eligible patients are enrolled in pharmaceutical company sponsored assistance programs. Enrolled patients discharged from the hospital are provided with covered medications, so they leave the hospital with the medication they need.

“If they have no way to get their medication, it’s much more likely they will have a second hospitalization,” said Eric Warren, PharmD, BCPS, Clinical Manager, Munson Medical Center Pharmacy. “It’s more cost effective to make sure they have what they need to get them firmly on the road to health.”

All Munson Healthcare System hospitals have programs in place to help patients receive the medications they need.

Outside of Detroit, northern lower Michigan has the highest rate of uninsured adults in the state, estimated at about 17 percent. Affordability is the primary reason people don’t have insurance.
During the past 10 years, the rate of diagnosed diabetes in Michigan has soared 53 percent. “Last year, a consortium of groups decided it was time to reverse that trend, and the Northern Michigan Diabetes Initiative was formed,” said Diane Butler, Manager of Community Health for Munson Healthcare.

“The breadth of community involvement and the enthusiasm are most impressive,” said Jim Byrne, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Priority Health. “I think they have it right because the focus is on measurable improvement in health.”

“We can make a difference for people with diabetes – the difference between suffering from diabetes and living with diabetes,” said Steve Lamie, MD, Medical Director for the Munson Medical Center Diabetes Program.

5 Ways to Prevent Diabetes

- Lose excess weight
- Eat healthy; focus on variety, portion control
- Go for whole grains, at least 3 grams of fiber per serving
- Get more physical activity
- See your health care provider regularly

“This Northern Michigan Diabetes Initiative is a terrific example of teamwork done right.”
Doug Slater, MD
Munson Healthcare System
Quality Strategy Leader

Diabetes: Reversing the Trend

The Partners
Munson Healthcare System hospitals, physicians, educators, Priority Health, TIPDON, health departments, and other organizations are working on a 10-year project to reduce the incidence of diabetes and improve care for those with diabetes.

Steps Being Taken
- Promotion of best practices among all physicians, using a toolkit with screening guidelines, treatment standards, and other resources
- Standardization of diabetes care throughout our communities
- Increased screening for pre-diabetes and diabetes
- Public education and awareness

Connecting Care
Care of diabetes patients has changed dramatically in recent years. “With the explosion in diabetes, we’re seeing a lot of new medications and more emphasis on prevention and being proactive on the front end of the disease,” said Don Caraccio, MD, Chair of the Steering Committee for Munson Medical Center’s Inpatient Diabetes Initiative. “Our goal is to better connect the inpatient and outpatient worlds so there is a two-way flow of communication between all health care providers.”

Diabetes Initiative efforts are being undertaken in hospitals System wide to provide the highest quality, consistent care.

One out of every five patients admitted to Munson Medical Center has diabetes.
Neal Breaugh has advice for people newly diagnosed with diabetes:

“Be optimistic, and learn to live with it.”

Breaugh was diagnosed with diabetes in the mid 1990s, about the time he retired from teaching. He managed his disease with exercise, diet, and medication for more than a decade.

“They don’t have a cure for diabetes, but there is no reason in today’s world that you have to end up with complications like losing a foot,” Breaugh said. “They can spot very quickly any little problem and treat it before it becomes a big problem.”

Breaugh, 74, is a stickler for monitoring his blood sugar levels and blood pressure. He logs daily readings and weekly averages on his computer. “I’m a detail person,” he said. He checks his feet regularly for signs of injury or loss of feeling, and he has a regular eye exam by an ophthalmologist.

Last spring he noticed his blood sugar levels were on the rise. “I called my doctor and told him, ‘My scores are too high, I think I have to go on insulin.’” After a check-up, his physician agreed, and Breaugh now uses an insulin pen every night.

“Diabetes is really a debilitating disease,” he said. “It can be discouraging, but keep a stiff upper lip. Take charge. You have to be willing to do what they tell you to do, or pay the consequences.”

Diabetes hasn’t slowed him down. In April, the Breaughs went on safari in Africa. “Emily and I have a pretty good quality of life. We travel, play tennis, and we sure can dance up a storm when we go on cruises.”

The Survey Says

A survey of 1,000 residents across 11 counties showed:

- A general lack of awareness about pre-diabetes. Untreated, pre-diabetes usually progresses into type 2 diabetes, but can be delayed or prevented through lifestyle changes.

- A common misperception that eating specific foods causes diabetes. This is a myth. Being overweight presents the risk.

- A high awareness that blindness and amputation are potential serious complications of diabetes, but a lower awareness that heart disease is a leading cause of death among people with diabetes.
‘Munson Saved My Life’

Without a lot of quick action, Merrie Kirker would have died at home on December 13 while having a second heart attack. Kirker hesitated to call 911 because she doesn’t have insurance. A neighbor intervened and made the call.

EMTs swiftly began life-saving care, and Munson’s heart intervention team set a new record – Kirker’s blocked artery was opened just 49 minutes after she arrived at the hospital.

“\textbf{I knew it was serious as they were running down the hall with me to surgery,}” Kirker said.

She received two stents, a temporary pacemaker, and recovered in Munson’s Heart Center. “\textbf{My care was phenomenal;}” she said. “\textbf{I had a private room with extremely dedicated and skilled nurses caring for me around the clock. The high level of care was astounding. I can remember when patients received minimal care and were placed in wards if they did not have insurance, or one with low compensation. Munson has certainly raised the bar on patient care.}”

Kirker was sent home after four days. She was very anxious about her hospital bill. “\textbf{I knew I’d be paying for this the rest of my life.}” Kirker was advised to apply for financial assistance from Munson.

She did, and her entire bill – more than $40,000 – was covered.

“\textbf{I was overwhelmed, extremely grateful, and relieved,}” she said. “\textbf{I was in tears over this huge blessing. Munson is the area’s largest employer – who knew it had a heart so big? Thanks to Munson’s generosity, I really have a second chance. Munson saved my life in more ways than one.}”

Munson Medical Center
‘Nobody Gets Turned Away’

Many people in northern Michigan can’t afford the hospital care they need, but that doesn’t mean they have to go without.

Last year, Munson Medical Center covered $3.7 million in hospital costs for 7,500 patients – a significant increase from the 4,200 patients who received Charity Care the previous year.

As a non-profit organization with a mission to serve the community, Munson Medical Center and other System hospitals provide medical treatment to everyone – regardless of their ability to pay.

“We recognize there are people who need help, and we want to help,” said Karen Popa, Director of Munson’s Patient Access Services. “Nobody gets turned away because of their inability to pay – the patient will get their procedure or test if it is medically necessary.”

Who Qualifies For Charity Care?

Full coverage is available to anyone with a family income at 200 percent of the federal poverty level or below.

Hospital care is fully paid for:

- A single person earning $20,420 or less
- A couple earning $27,380 or less
- A family of four earning $41,300 or less

Three Important Don’ts

- Don’t worry about your bill; solutions are available
- Don’t be afraid to discuss your situation
- Don’t ignore your bill; talk with a financial counselor

Financial Counselors: Here to Help

Munson’s Financial Counselors work with uninsured hospitalized patients to help them apply for financial assistance. Counselors also are assigned to the Emergency Department to assist uninsured people who often seek medical care through the ER.

Financial counselor Jennifer Kudla in Patient Accounts processes all applications for financial assistance.

“I really enjoy letting patients know we can help.”

Bad Debt and Charity Care

All seven hospitals and other entities within the Munson Healthcare System provide Charity Care. Last year, a total of $5.4 million in costs was covered for patients who could not afford their care or services.
Recruiting skilled physicians is one way to address the pending physician shortage in Michigan. Training them at your own facility is another.

During the past decade, the Munson Family Practice Residency Program has graduated 50 new Family Practice Specialists. About 30 stayed in northern Michigan to practice, increasing access to health care in area communities.

Munson partners with Michigan State University to train residents as they prepare for board certification. Residents work for three years at Munson Family Practice Center gaining experience in physician office, hospital, and community-based settings.

“They come in as very intelligent physicians – they leave as intelligent physicians who are also empathetic, caring, and highly competent,” said Dan Webster, MD, Residency Program Director. “I see their growth from day to day, from week to week, as they gain confidence, maturity, and a sense of comfort with who they are as family physicians.”

Residents also gain an important sense of caring for community members who struggle with access to care. “Thirty-five percent of our patients at Munson Family Practice are indigent, uninsured, or underinsured,” Webster said. “Most of our graduates continue to see the uninsured and underinsured in their own practices.”

‘Major Gift of Time’

Munson’s Graduate Medical Education program was awarded the 2007 Special Olympics Michigan Spirit Award for ongoing service in providing sports physicals for area Special Olympians. Physician residents cleared their calendars to provide physicals at the Adult Work Center for about 200 area athletes. Award presenters called their efforts “inspirational” and “a major gift of time and resources.”
After 11 years of education and training, Andrew Long, DO, age 34, is about to begin his medical career. He will join Kalkaska Family Practice in June following graduation from Munson’s Family Practice Residency Program. It’s been a long haul.

“I entered medicine through a non-traditional route,” Long said. He worked as a mechanical engineer for five years, designing and re-manufacturing machine screws and gears. Long noticed some of his colleagues counting days until retirement, and he didn’t want to spend his career focused on when it would be over.

Using his engineering skills, he launched a construction company. He also volunteered with the local EMS service, following his father’s example. It became increasingly clear to him that his heart belonged to medicine.

He juggled marriage, medical school, fatherhood, and a three-year residency at Munson Medical Center to achieve his dream of becoming a physician.

Raised in rural Luther, the idea of practicing in a small community like Kalkaska has great appeal. “In a rural practice you can develop close relationships with your patients and their families,” he said. “In Family Practice, you get to see it all. It’s a really good feeling to know your patients, and to have a long-term impact on their life and their health.”

“I’m completing a goal that has taken many demanding years to accomplish,” he said. “With the end of a long educational process in sight, I am very excited to get started.”

By 2010, Michigan will have a shortage of 900 physicians.

Nearly four of every 10 physicians practicing in Michigan plan to retire within the next 10 years.

Within 15 years, Michigan will face a shortage of more than 4,000 physicians, about 12 percent fewer than needed to meet demand for services.

Continuing Medical Education
Staying On Top of The Game
Health care is constantly changing. During 2007, Munson Medical Center offered 345 Continuing Medical Education (CME) activities, which constituted 664 hours of education to help physicians and staff stay current with today’s best practices.

Physicians, residents, and medical students earned a combined 5,439 credits of continuing education on a variety of topics last year.

Medical staff support and community donations though the Munson Healthcare Regional Foundation’s CME Directed Fund assist this continuing education.
Principal Brian Harbour knows how difficult it is to get students at Northside Education Center to attend any kind of program in their free time. So he’s amazed that Liz Schwind and Rachel Hoppe can repeatedly pack a room with teenagers during a lunch hour.

Their secret? They bring pizza – along with a lot of health information, free hygiene products, and a sincere willingness to listen to kids.

Schwind and Hoppe are school outreach workers for the Teen Health Corner, a collaborative project spearheaded by Kalkaska Memorial Health Center, (KMHC) and Kalkaska and Forest Area Public Schools. The program is in its third year.

“Liz and Rachel have a real good rapport with the students,” Harbour said. “We have very needy kids. Having them here to handle health issues sure takes the burden off of us. My teachers can spend their time teaching.”

Dale Kasza, principal of Kalkaska High School, agreed. “It’s a very successful program for us. The biggest breakthrough is the positive, trusting relationships they’ve built.

The kids feel free to ask health questions for themselves and probably for their friends.”

Hoppe graduated from Kalkaska High School in 2000, returning to work at her alma mater after earning an English Education degree. “The life of a teenager can be awkward – many things are uncomfortable,” Hoppe said. “So when they say they are comfortable with us, it’s a great reassurance that we’re doing something right.”

M.J. Grajewski, Principal at Forest Area High School, initially had reservations about the program,
Kalkaska Memorial Health Center provided $102,988 in supplemental funding for the Teen Health Corner school-linked clinic last year. The Teen Health Corner provides health care to those ages 10 - 21, and is located next to KMHC.

but is now a firm supporter. He's deeply impressed by the relationships Schwind has built with students and the help she's provided, including intercepting several students considering suicide. “Liz is an amazing young woman. She has empathy, compassion, and an open door. The students want to talk to her because they trust her. She has really lightened the burden that falls on counselors and principals.”

“The schools have made this a priority,” Schwind said. “The collaboration is just huge. I’ve learned more from this job and these kids than they could ever learn from me. I’m grateful to be here. I’m honored that the kids tell me their stories. There’s a lot of trust there.”

The state Department of Education and Department of Community Health extended a $225,000 grant for the Teen Health Corner for another two years.

“I hope we don’t ever lose the Teen Health Corner and what it’s doing for our parents and our kids,” said Kalkaska Middle School Principal Diane Swoverland.

By The Numbers: FY 2007

596 Students seen at the Teen Health Corner

460 Students seen in the schools

715 Students immunized

276 Students transported to medical appointments

2,579 Total number of visits to school outreach offices and the Teen Health Corner

Protect Your Teen

5 Immunizations Your Teen May Need

- Meningococcal (meningitis)
- Varicella (chicken pox)
- Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis
- Hepatitis B
- HPV

Check with your health care provider to make sure your teen has all the immunizations he or she needs to stay healthy.
Eat properly, rest, get regular check-ups

Six Ways to Prevent Caregiver Burnout

- Read, listen to music, phone friends, exercise
- Find someone you trust to talk to
- Taking care of yourself is an absolute necessity

A delicious lunch, useful information, health checks, flu shots, and some well-deserved pampering awaited participants in the annual Caregivers Retreat last November in Benzie County.

The special “day out” for caregivers honored their efforts and offered them valuable resources. Vendors, agencies, and Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital (POMH) staff members pitched in to help at the event, sponsored by the Benzie County Senior Services Workgroup.

Cheri Zalewski, a Registered Nurse at POMH, shared visual imagery and progressive relaxation techniques she has used in nursing for 25 years.

“Caregivers have a lot on their plates,” Zalewski said. “I find it very rewarding to teach people a tool they can use in any setting to relax and decrease their stress, something that will help them regenerate and rejuvenate.”

The annual Caregivers Retreat has gone over very well, she said. “You can watch people as they come in – they aren’t smiling, they have their heads down, but by the time they leave they are very relaxed.”

Zalewski directed a group of participants to close their eyes and imagine themselves on a beach with warm sand under their feet.

“I had them dip their toes in the cool water, and then I had them take a stroll down the beach. Afterwards, a woman in a wheelchair shared how meaningful the session was to her – it was the first time in years she’d gone for a ‘walk.’ If I had thought of it, I’d have had her running down that beach.”

Resources for Caregivers

Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital in Frankfort supports caregivers in several ways:

- **Caregiver Resource Center Library**
  The library is open every day from 8 am to 8 pm, and is located next to the main lobby.

- **Hospice Respite Room**
  A home-like room overlooks Lake Michigan and is available for hospice patients for a maximum five-day stay when caregivers need a respite.

- **Support Groups**
  Two groups meet at POMH monthly to provide information and support to those who are caring for someone with progressive disease.
Sometimes people with Parkinson's Disease can’t roll over in bed by themselves. That means their caregiver must wake up during the night to turn them.

It’s just one of many daily caregiving tasks undertaken by 50 million Americans caring for an adult in their home.

As a caregiver and leader of the Parkinson’s Support Group at Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, Janet Hough of Beulah understands the challenges. She also knows there are many ways to find joy and minimize the burden, isolation, and demands placed on a caregiver.

The annual Caregiver’s Retreat in Benzie County is one such bright spot.

“It was lovely,” Hough said. “They did a beautiful job. It’s good to be educated about what is available in the community and be with others going through the same experience so you know you’re not the only one in this boat.”

Hough’s husband, Fred, a former hospital and nursing home administrator, is doing better these days. Fred was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease 15 years ago. A trip to Mayo Clinic a few years ago resulted in a more refined diagnosis: severe adrenergic system failure – a disorder within the Parkinsonian family of diseases.

With a medication change, physical therapy, and daily exercise, Fred is steadier on his feet, buttoning his own shirts with ease, and even driving more.

“People need to know that there is hope, and there is help,” Hough said. “Go to a support group meeting – you will become educated about the disease and you’ll make friends.”
Some chronic diseases, such as heart failure and diabetes, cannot be cured—but many people who have them can live an active life. It’s Chris De Anna’s job to show them how.

De Anna, RN, MSW, is a Community Wellness Coach. She oversees a new Living Well program offered by Mercy Hospital Grayling that helps patients maintain or improve their quality of life by better managing their chronic disease over their lifetime.

Family physicians referred more than 25 patients to the program during its first few months. “We want to enhance the information patients receive from their physician,” De Anna said. “By monitoring certain triggers, we can identify a problem ahead of time,” De Anna said. “Our goal is to empower patients and get people in to see their physician before they need hospitalization.”

Through collaboration with Michigan State University Extension, a six-week “Personal Action Toward Health” (PATH) program allows participants to learn how to handle everyday activities more easily and share experiences with others facing similar challenges.

Funded in part by a grant from Trinity Health, Living Well helps people stay out of the hospital. “Our patients don’t want to be in the hospital,” De Anna said. “We want to help them access the most appropriate health care setting.”

Give Your Heart a Break
Here are four ways to show your heart a little love:

• Take it for a walk. Climb the stairs. Your heart is a muscle. Flex it with daily exercise.

• Eat a rainbow. Try to eat all colors of fruits and vegetables every day.

• Know your risk factors. You can’t change your age, gender, or family history, but you can control your cholesterol, stress, blood pressure, smoking, and diabetes.

• Watch for warnings. Do not ignore your heart when it sends you a warning. Seek treatment immediately if you have chest pain or pressure; jaw, neck, or upper back discomfort; profuse sweating; profound fatigue; nausea; or dizziness.
Pat Paul's heart doesn't pump enough blood to her lungs. It's a condition that can leave her short of breath, fatigued, or with swollen feet. It could also easily land her in the hospital. A new program offered by Mercy Hospital Grayling helps Paul and those like her live well with chronic disease and avoid hospitalization.

Paul, 62, and her husband live on Higgins Lake. She was hospitalized in 2005 with an embolism, and has been diagnosed with heart failure, mitral stenosis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Paul was one of the first patients referred to the Living Well with Heart Failure program. “It doesn’t scare you, it just lets you know you have this condition and there are things you can do to stay out of the hospital.”

“It’s very helpful,” Paul said. “It helped me understand that I’m not alone, and that depression and fatigue related to my condition are normal. I’ve learned what to avoid in my diet, like salt and fat – at first you think, ‘this is miserable’ but it doesn’t have to be.”

Knowing her Wellness Coach is monitoring her health gives Paul a lot of peace of mind. “It’s nice to know if I have questions I can call her – I don’t have to rush to the doctor’s office – she’ll help find out what’s bothering me.”

“I’m more conscious of how I feel now, and the majority of the time I feel fine. I can do anything I want, I just don’t push myself too hard.”
Identifying a problem is the first step toward fixing it. **Mercy Hospital Cadillac** invested in a Community Needs Assessment during 2007 to determine the greatest health concerns in Wexford and Missaukee counties. The assessment will guide decisions about programs, resources, and future capital investment.

“It’s an action tool,” said Dawn Ewald, RN, Manager of Community Education at Mercy Hospital Cadillac. “It provides a foundation for strategic planning for the hospital, the health department, and groups interested in the health of the community.”

**The Findings**

The assessment compiled health data from various sources. Among findings targeted for improvement strategies are:

- **Access to Care**
  
  An estimated 16 percent of Wexford County’s population had no access to health care during a 12-month period because of cost. Fewer physicians accept patients with Medicaid, limiting access to care. Wexford County has one of the highest percentages of population in Michigan receiving Medicaid.

- **Teen Pregnancy**
  
  The teen pregnancy rate for Missaukee County has followed the state trend and declined during the past 10 years, but Wexford County has the fifth highest teenage pregnancy rate in Michigan among 83 counties. Births to teens result in many risk factors for the child and the teen mom.

- **Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease**
  
  This is the third leading cause of death in the Cadillac area (behind heart disease and cancer); rates are significantly higher than the state average. Tobacco smoking causes about 80 percent of all cases of chronic lower respiratory disease. Smoking also causes 87 percent of lung cancer.

- **Stroke, Diabetes, Obesity**
  
  The stroke death rate is trending downward, but remains consistently above the state average in Missaukee County; diabetes and obesity rates are climbing and are contributing factors to many other health-related illnesses and death.

**The Recommendations**

- Work with the faith community, schools, parents, teens, and health professionals to develop a community plan to combat the high teen pregnancy rate and reduce sexually transmitted infections.

- Work with the Tobacco Coalition and Health Coalition to encourage local and state policy makers to limit or eliminate smoking in public places; increase opportunities to help adults stop smoking.

- Coordinate efforts with area providers that include stronger emphasis on diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease management.

- Work with local units of government to budget resources for improved recreational facilities, including outdoor pathways during winter months.

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**Treating the Uninsured**

During FY 2007, the Cadillac Area Community Health Clinic treated 600 patients, and dispensed more than $1.4 million in medications at no charge to the patient. Seventy percent of the uninsured clients seen at the free clinic are employed with one or more jobs. Mercy Hospital Cadillac supports the clinic through donations and in-kind services.
Eighty-three adults in Wexford and Missaukee Counties died from complications of smoking in 2005.

Dawn Ewald, RN, Manager of Community Education at Mercy Hospital Cadillac, is doing everything she can to make sure the upcoming generation understands that smoking will likely ruin their health.

Smoking prevention programs in the community have been largely geared towards children and teenagers, Ewald said, but the message still needs to be delivered to adults.

Trends show tobacco use among high school students has decreased considerably since 1997. Ewald believes programs such as the “Monster Cigarette” and “Alveoli Adventure” that she presents in elementary schools are part of the reason. Funded by a Cadillac Area Community Foundation grant, the programs for fourth and fifth graders focus on how chemicals in cigarettes harm the body.

“We’ve been doing an effective job of educating our children about the hazards of smoking,” Ewald said. “A 2007 state survey showed our students now rate regular cigarette use as riskier than regular alcohol or marijuana use. We’ve made the point with cigarettes. Now we have to go back and talk to them about alcohol and marijuana.”

Smoking-related direct health care costs in Wexford and Missaukee counties were $19.5 million in 2005.
Linda Berg was distraught when a physician recommended she have both knees and a hip replaced— as well as stomach surgery to help her lose weight.

“I wanted to curl up and die,” she said. “I was scared to death of having surgery.” Then she came across information about an Arthritis Self-Help Course offered at West Shore Medical Center in Manistee, in association with the Arthritis Foundation. Taking a class seemed a lot less intimidating than surgery.

Berg, 60, retired as a fifth-grade teacher in 2003 after arthritis made it hard for her to get around. “I had given up. I was just sitting and knitting, and thinking, ‘Well, this is it for me.’ ”

The arthritis class was her first step toward a new life. Berg was so encouraged by what she learned, she began approaching life differently.

In 15 months, her health turned around. “I’ve lost 80 pounds. I just feel great,” she said. “Best of all, the surgeon released me as a patient—he said I wouldn’t need surgery for at least 10 years.”

Berg was completely against joining a fitness club. “I thought, ‘No, that’s not for me.’ But the arthritis class helped me connect to the gym because it is in the same building. I looked in and saw people my age there. At first I was intimidated by the machines, but they walked me through it—I just needed to get my foot in the door.”

Berg and her husband Greg go to the Health Connection four or five times a week to work out. “It’s a lifeline for me,” Berg said.

“I’m so blessed that West Shore makes this available. Now I can walk down the steps to the lake, I can ride a bike, I can lift my grandson. I have new horizons—every day is new for me. I don’t even look at my knitting and crocheting anymore.”
‘Part of their Joy’

With 635 members, the Health Connection in Manistee pulses with activity from 5:30 am until 9 pm. Owned by West Shore Medical Center, it’s the only community gym in Manistee.

“A lot of people come here after they have finished cardiac rehabilitation or physical therapy,” Health Connection Manager Dursa Marshall said. “This is another step in the continuum of care. Sometimes they’ve had a life-changing episode and they think, ‘the next time I might not come out of it as well,’ so they want to continue their exercises. It brings home how important this gym is to people.”

The Health Connection is located in the Northwest Michigan Health Center, two doors away from the hospital. West Shore’s investment in the Health Connection is seen in the improved health and fitness it provides to area residents.

Staff credentials include degrees in exercise science and certifications in nutrition management, personal training, and specialized exercise methods. Staff evaluate medical history, help develop short and long-term fitness goals, and coordinate exercise plans with physicians.

Community members say the staff’s easy-going nature and camaraderie among exercisers make it a fun place to be.

“I love it when they see improvements,” Marshall said. “They are so excited when they say ‘Oh, I’ve lost weight’ or ‘I went shopping and walked without getting tired.’ I get to be part of their joy.”
When a new baby comes home, nobody’s life is ever quite the same.

Helping families get off to a healthy and safe start is a key goal of health education programs at all Munson Healthcare System hospitals. Classes for parents, grandparents, and siblings are among dozens of health education programs provided by nurse educators and other health care professionals around the Munson Healthcare System.

Last year, Darla Edwards, Parent Education Coordinator at Otsego Memorial Hospital, led classes for 99 couples, most of whom were expecting their first child.

“I love being part of this amazing time in their lives,” Edwards said. “It’s a happy time – it’s exciting to share information that I know is going to help them with their delivery and with their parenting.”
Colic is not a physical disorder or disease; it simply refers to three or more hours a day of continued crying without a visible explanation. Only 10 - 15 percent of cases of colic are caused by milk allergies.

5 Tips to Calm Your Crying Infant*

If you’re walking the floors with a baby who just won’t stop crying, try these tactics said to activate an infant’s natural calming reflex by mimicking the rhythmic, hypnotic sounds and movement in the womb:

- Swaddling
- Side-lying/stomach-lying in parent’s arms only
- Swaying
- Shushing (loudly – infants are used to a whooshing sound louder than a vacuum cleaner)
- Sucking

* Adapted from a presentation to the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference.

Sibling Prep 101

One of Edwards’ favorite exercises to do with 3-to-10 year olds who attend a Sibling Preparation Class is to help them trace an outline of their foot. When their new brother or sister arrives, they place a print of the baby’s foot inside their own tracing. “It helps them understand how little the new baby really is.”

After decorating a onesie t-shirt for the new baby and other activities, Edwards takes the children on a tour of the hospital’s Birthing Center. “They can see where Mom will be, and that it is not a scary place.”
Last year, seven hospitals and subsidiaries in the Munson Healthcare System provided $47.2 million in Community Benefit and other significant financial contributions to the residents of northern Michigan.

Community Benefit is defined as programs or activities that provide treatment or promote health and healing in response to an identified community need.

Community Benefit programs must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Respond to a public health need
- Involve education or research that improves overall community health
- Respond to needs of special populations
- Supply services or programs that would likely be discontinued if the decision was made on a purely financial basis because they operate at a financial loss