



**Fall  
2025**



*Photo by BB Photography*

**VETERANS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL & CLINICS**

# **FOUNTAINS OF HEALTH**

CELEBRATING

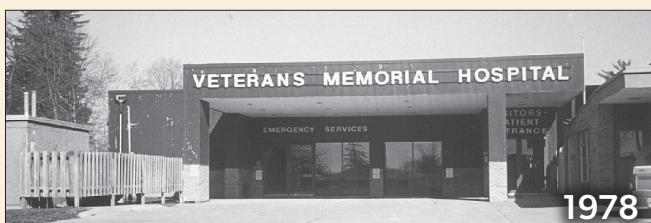
**75 YEARS**  
1950-2025  
of Care



1950



1965



1978

This special historical edition of the Fountains of Health is full of reflections from our past staff, board members, and patients, plus highlights many ways we plan to continue to care for all of you for another 75 years!

34th Annual

## ***Christmas Fantasy***



**A Christmas  
Vacation**

Enjoy a fun-filled Christmas Fantasy on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, November 14, 15, 16, and 17, at the Allamakee Fairgrounds Pavilion!

Enjoy the numerous spectacular Christmas trees, each decorated and sponsored by local individuals, organizations, and businesses. Additionally, there is an on-site silent auction featuring over 100 various items, all available for the highest bidder to win when the auction ends at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, November 17. Until that closing time, bidders can return, free of charge, to the Fantasy and raise their bid. NEW THIS YEAR... a live auction will take place on opening night, Friday, November 14, at 7:00 p.m.!

*Christmas Fantasy ... Continued on Page 7*

## *From the Administrator...*



**Michael Coyle, CEO**

Fall brings cooler temperatures, shorter days, and beautiful changing leaves. One thing that never changes, however, is Veterans Memorial Hospital's unwavering commitment to patient-centered care and delivering the best healthcare experience possible.

This past year has been an exciting and busy one at VMH with the successful implementation of our new Electronic Health Record system, Epic, in partnership with the University of Iowa. Epic offers patients and staff streamlined workflows, enhanced care, improved accuracy, and seamless communication across providers and hospitals. These improvements translate into better outcomes, reduced costs, fewer errors, and stronger patient engagement.

Through MyChart, Epic also puts the power of healthcare directly into our patients' hands. With this secure online portal and mobile app, patients can:

- View test results
- Schedule appointments
- Communicate directly with their care team
- Request medication refills
- Pay bills conveniently

Our commitment to accessible, high-quality care continues as we welcome several new Primary Care and Behavioral Health Providers this fall and winter. We are thrilled to introduce:

- Dr. John Swords
- Janet Hunter, PMHNP
- Angela Taylor, PMHNP
- Hannah Kelly, ARNP
- Mason Kerian, ARNP

We are excited for you to meet these outstanding professionals, who bring both expertise and compassion to the VMH family.

Take the next step today: Sign up for MyChart to take control of your healthcare or call us to schedule an appointment with one of our new providers. At VMH, we're here for you—every season of the year.

*Michael*

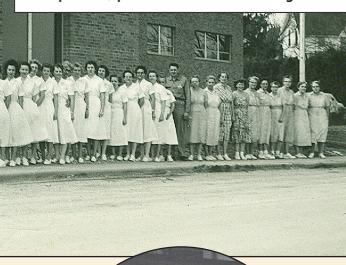
# What Does 75 Years Look Like?

While the building has changed, the exceptional, compassionate care has always remained.

**We Look Forward to  
Serving Our Friends and Neighbors  
for Another 75 Years!**



**Enjoy Our "Throwback Thursday" Photos Each Week as We Celebrate Our 75th Year!**  
Watch our Facebook and Instagram pages, and if you can recognize anyone in the photos, please send us a message!



**We now employ nearly 300 staff members who continue to offer personalized, compassionate care.**

As stated by Mary Riley, RN, a long-time employee and known as the founding "mother" of the hospital,

**"You still get the best care here at Veterans Memorial Hospital. The building is incidental—it's the people who are the important factor."**



# Reflections

from Jim Klenske

## Past Board of Trustees Member & Recent Patient

Jim Klenske of Waukon was a 10-year-old boy living in New Hampton, IA, when he first heard about the construction of a hospital in Waukon. The son of the contractor for the project happened to be building a new home behind Jim's family's house. He came up to Jim one day, told him about the project, and said, "I have a job for you to do while I'm away working in Waukon. Every few days, I need you to shovel in one foot of dirt around the foundation of my new home, then soak it down good, let it dry, and add another layer until you're up to the top." Jim explains, "I did just that and earned \$25 for the entire project, which was good money at that time. I checked on it a few years later and it hadn't sunk one bit!"

"The name of the company was Stoltz Construction. My neighbor also explained to me that his dad, the contractor, stopped construction and said he wouldn't go any further until they did one thing that was not in the plans... lay footings under one of the internal weight-bearing walls. Otherwise, the basement floor would have been all broken up. They did, and the hospital is still standing strong today."

Later, Jim worked for his uncle pumping gas, which sold for \$.22 per gallon or 5 gallons for \$1. The local drugstore owner asked his mom if he would like to come work for him instead, and he did. In his senior year of high school, the owner asked him if he would like to go to school and be a pharmacist. "I didn't have the finances, but they said that was no problem, that they would help me, so they took me down to the University of Iowa and got me enrolled. After graduation, I came back to fulfill my service to them in their store, but they had another pharmacist on duty and didn't really need me."

"Myrl Sullivan was the current owner of Sullivan Drug in downtown Waukon (where Gemini Salon & Spa is currently located). One day, his wife stopped into our store, looking for a pharmacist. The owners said I should go and look at the opportunity. The salary was appropriate, so I looked at the store and accepted the job. She found us a little apartment in town, and my wife, Elenora (Ele), and I moved to Waukon in 1956."

A few years later, Dan Regan, the other pharmacist on staff, chose to open his own pharmacy and purchased the building across the street (where ECow currently sits). The business was later owned by Joe Cunningham, who eventually relocated it to the former Schultz Dime Store—now Hartig Drug."

"I loved the community and wanted to give back, so I belonged to a number of organizations in town. I helped start the JaCee's, but then when I hit 35, I was too old to belong, and I was still too young to be in the Kiwanis Club, so we started the Waukon Lions Club and that one has survived!"

"In 1978, I ran for hospital board and got elected, staying on through 1989. Good Sam had managed the hospital from the standpoint of dollars and cents and the government said you can't have that organization running the hospital, so the City of Waukon began managing it. Good Sam left us \$100,000 to work with to be sure the help got paid during the transition, and then that was paid back to them over time."

This summer, Jim learned again about the importance of that hometown hospital he had worked so hard for. When out watering flowers, he fell flat on his face, finding out later that his hip joint and femur separated, which caused the fall. "That Sunday night, not one car passed the house, which is not normal. I rolled to the door, but I just couldn't reach the light, so I laid back down and waited. At 5:30 am, two girls out walking saw me and got on the stick right away. Fifteen minutes later, I was in the ER, being checked over. I was sent to La Crosse for surgery, where they inserted a titanium rod down into my femur and hooked it up to what was left of the ball, attaching it to the femur. Three days after surgery, on Thursday, they came in and said it was time to ship me out and wondered where I'd like to go for my care. I told them Veterans Memorial Hospital in Waukon. The doctor asked if they had good physical therapy there, and I told her, 'The best in Northeast Iowa, and you should have them here on your records!' Like that, I was shipped, which was fine, as I would just as soon be down here anyway, getting all of my exercises. I spent two weeks in skilled care and then, since I no longer qualified, it was time to go home. Occupational Therapy came ahead of time to inspect my house and my kids got it all ready for me with a few adaptations. Then, Community & Home Care came to see me for a couple of weeks until I no longer qualified for their services. My kids continue to take great care of me and I'm happy to be here once again on my own!"



"All went well until the big hospitals started to grow and affiliate. We checked out some of those big hospitals and toured four or five small ones about the same size as ours that had affiliated, and afterwards I said, 'I don't think we would be any better off affiliating with those hospitals. They don't offer enough services to make it worth it and we would just be a feeding tube for them.' We said we can do better than that... and we got the hospital back to making money and paid off our debts."

"When needed, we would go to the city and ask for help and would get some, but not much. One day, we received a sizable donation from the Cora Riggemeyer Estate and we decided we didn't want this just going for wages and day-to-day expenses. It needed to be invested in big equipment purchases, so that

Klenske ... Continued on Page 4

was when we started the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation. That was a Godsend! It really inspired a lot of people to start sending donations in for memorials, and it has sure helped so much over the years."

"We had our tough times, and we would pull back out of them, then fall back into them, but the biggest problem was and still is the government running everything, like the payments, inspections, and the like."

*Pictured are Jim Klenske, Pharmacist; Machelle Bulman, then Nurse Educator/Infection Control; and Joe Cunningham, Pharmacist. This photo, taken around 1995, marks the time when both pharmacists began the Sharps Recycling Project, which is still in place today.*



## Still a **STRONG** VMH Advocate

Harold Pronga has vast experience in business as well as education and used his expertise during his 12-year commitment to the Board of Trustees for the hospital from 1980 to 1992. His dedication and support have remained strong through all these years, and he is a great example to others on ASKING if his care can be done locally. He ALWAYS ASKS if his procedure or test can be done here instead of at the larger facilities. If they tell him no, he finds another specialist who tells him yes and makes it happen!

"I was recently ordered to have an echocardiogram by my cardiologist, and they wanted me to have it in La Crosse. I informed them they do those in Waukon and asked to have it done down here, and they told me no, until I ran into nurse Jill Amble, who I knew when I lived in New Albin and was principal. When I asked her if I could have that test locally, she told me sure and made it happen," explains Harold. "Sometimes I have to ask several times to have things done here. In fact, once in Rochester, they insisted my test had to be done up there, and I told them, 'Ok, thank you for your time. I will be finding a new provider who does let me have my tests locally, and that is what I did!'"

As Harold reflected on his years on the board, he shared, "The best thing we did was start to acquire the land around the hospital. The three houses on Main Street, Grace Moe's, Dr. Wiley's house, which also served as his clinic, and Dr. Bakkum's house, were all where the hospital's Waukon Clinic sits now. We didn't have any money back then, but we figured out how to do it and we were glad we did."

"Another great thing we did was recruit Dr. Olson back to town. We were still heading up north to our cabin each fall and had Thanksgiving dinner with him and his family. People loved Ken and doctor acquisition was difficult for rural hospitals. These were the years when the government was changing what they paid us for Medicare patients, which was worth 62% of our revenue. We hired Dan Woods as our next administrator and he did well with that challenge. He always did what the Board recommended and followed up on everything."

"We also contracted Linda Montet to design a logo for the hospital in the 1980s. It is wonderful to see that logo still being used today."



*Harold and Connie Pronga of Waukon are seated at the same boardroom table used during the Board of Trustees meetings Harold would attend when on the Board from 1980-1992. The table was originally constructed by Dr. Louis Bray and was refinished nearly 10 years ago by Ernie Lubahn.*

"Dick Schilling, the newspaper editor, attended every board meeting and covered everything very well. Everyone on our board was in sync with trying to maintain this hospital. There was even discussion then on expanding the borders as a county hospital after the Postville hospital closed in 1990 and I was glad to see that vote go through a few years ago. Everyone was always looking at what services could be provided that we weren't already doing."

"Salaries and pay were always tough, especially when trying to compete with La Crosse. The Director of Nursing always wanted to get more money for the staff, but I pointed out that when driving that far to work, their 8-hour workday becomes a 10-hour workday, so they really aren't making more money, plus they put themselves in danger driving 100 miles each shift. We had good people, and we wanted to keep them, but there was only so

*Pronga ... Continued on Page 5*

# COMMENTS FROM THE CURRENT LONG-TIME BOARD MEMBERS



**Dennis Lyons**  
**26 YEARS**

Changes to the VMH campus have been substantial. The Dr. Wiley Clinic building/house was acquired and moved to the country and is now a residence a mile north of Lycurgus. That gave way to Franciscan-Skemp building a clinic in its place that transitioned to Mayo and is now the VMH Clinic. Shortly after this, VMHCF completed a capital campaign that raised over \$1.25 million to add on and connect to the clinic. Several years later the Gundersen Clinic was connected to the south side of VMH.

Through the years, VMH has partnered with outside health systems to provide local services. At times, we've explored affiliation, and each time that decision has circled back to remaining independent, which we felt would benefit the local people we serve and our staff. While on the surface it appeared affiliation could afford financial stability, that was never assured. In addition, the Board of Trustees is conscious of having some control of services being provided here at home for our people.

No doubt changes in technology have been considerable and generally very positive. Our main challenges have always been staff retention, provider recruitment, and finances. Health care costs and reimbursement create a unique business model. VMH being independent and relatively small has always allowed it to adapt to change quickly in response to these challenges.



**Patty Nordheim**  
**25 YEARS**

Serving on the VMH Board of Trustees has been a privilege and a constant learning experience. The hospital is crucial to our service area's well-being, and our staff is tireless in their efforts to provide excellent health care. I'm still in awe of their capabilities, even after two decades of reading their monthly reports and watching them problem-solve during meetings. Our providers and staff still inspire me.



*The Board of Trustees pictured in the late 80s at that same table, which is still located in the Administrator's office today. Seated left to right are Helen Johnson, Dave Martin, Gayle Decker, Harold Pronga and Cheryl Kiesau.*

*Pronga ... Continued from Page 4*

much we could do."

Harold's wife, Connie, worked as a nurse at the hospital for a few years in the mid-70s, until their third son was born, and she decided to stay home. She remembers the phone operator, Shirley Weymiller, nurse Vicki Amble, and herself all driving together from New Albin to work here on some very slick roads.

"I can still see Dr. Wiley ready if someone came to the ER from a car accident or DOA, and you never knew how the family would react. He was so empathetic in every situation. I remember Esther Sunderman was a wonderful RN on staff. I was afraid of cardiac patients since my experience was in pediatrics, so it was a new area of nursing for me and she was so wonderful and patient."

"When I went back to work after our boys were all in school,

I started at the Good Sam. I was always so reassured working with Ingrid Hogan, the discharge planner for the hospital. It was such a simple process back then...she would ask for a bed for a patient, and I would tell her we had one, and they would roll them right over, and now it takes days and a bucketload of paperwork to get that accomplished."

Harold continues, "It was a good experience. I'm glad I served that long and I truly enjoyed most of it. I have fond memories of the people I worked with, including the other board members—Jim Klenske, Cheryl Kiesau, AV Palmer, Karlene Wonderlich and others, even though it was tough times."

"I always ask all my friends, 'Why don't you get that done in Waukon?' I will always continue to be an advocate because I still feel like it is such an asset to the community and gives such great service. You can get 90% of all of your needed health care right here, just a short distance from home."



*Moving of Dr. Wiley's house for the new clinic building in 1996.*



Les pictured with Juli Viet, RN, Community & Home Care Nurse.

# A Story of Lifelong Care at Veterans Memorial Hospital



Les and JoAnn Winters pictured in their home, where Les is recuperating.

Les Winters of Waukon has had a lifelong history of care at Veterans Memorial Hospital, beginning with his birth in 1952, making him one of the first babies born at the hospital. When he was just seven years old, he fell off a load of corn and broke his leg. He spent six weeks in traction in the hospital with his mom by his side every day. The hospital was just a decade old and a small building at the time.

His parents were also loyal to having their care at Veterans Memorial Hospital. He remembers how his dad used to love to dance with the nurses and in his mom's later years, when she no longer really knew anyone, Brad Krambeer was the only one who could get her to smile and do things no one else could get her to do.

Les and his wife, JoAnn, chose Veterans Memorial Hospital to have all four of their babies delivered by Dr. Bray or Dr. Perry. JoAnn reflects on the first time they found out just how important the hospital was to their family. "When we had our youngest son, Tom, I needed a c-section and the surgeon, Dr. Stull was called. He was doing another case at the time in West Union, and as soon as he was finished, he actually had a police escort from West Union to Waukon to get him here in time! We couldn't believe the service they provided us. I was in a panic. All of my other deliveries were so easy, but when I saw Barb Wilkes and Muggs Berns standing in the surgery room, I was so relieved and my blood pressure went back to normal!"

Throughout the years, Les and JoAnn continued to utilize the hospital and clinic when needed and JoAnn even joined the Housekeeping Team from 2009 until retiring in 2024. But in 2019, Les started to experience poor circulation to his feet—a hereditary issue on his side of the family—that, combined with spending his career on his feet working in the meat department of Quillin's Food Ranch, accelerated the condition.

"I had my first toe amputated right in Waukon in January of 2019 with the surgery staff and had a great experience," explains Les. "I stayed in the hospital for a short time, but then in November, I had to return for more circulation issues. I had to go to La Crosse for about a week to have a vein replacement using an artificial vein, and a partial foot amputation. At that time, Becky Welper, RN, was the discharge planner and she had to move mountains to get me back here, but she did! I was on Skilled Care and stayed here for nearly 40 days following. Brad Krambeer and Melissa Clarke in Rehabilitation worked and worked with me. They even let me sneak home for Thanksgiving and Christmas that year! When I was finally able to go back home, Home Care took great care of me and Physical Therapist, Laurel Hagensick, would come to our home to continue my therapy."

"It was so nice not to be running back and forth to La Crosse to see him and wonderful he could be right here at home for all that time. Our kids were so much closer to him too, and that made a world

of difference," adds JoAnn. "The family atmosphere here is amazing. If they didn't already know him from the grocery store, they knew him as a patient!"

Following that extended stay, Les had some complications now and then with infections, until last summer when it grew worse and he needed another vein replacement and partial amputation of his other leg.

"Dr. Valkosky at the Gundersen Waukon Clinic knew right where I needed to go for help in La Crosse. This time, I was able to use my own veins for the replacement and they performed the partial amputation of my right leg," explains Les. "This time I was dealing with more complicated infections and even had a heart attack. They wanted to send me to a nursing home for recovery until I asked them if I could go on Swing Bed care at VMH. Tatum Iverson, Social Worker, was the one this time who worked hard to get me back to the hospital on Swing Bed. They had really wanted to completely amputate my leg, but Dr. Schwartz worked one-on-one with me, doing more than they would have done anywhere else to keep my leg, and it worked! Dr. Schwartz is a great guy."

"Once again, the staff went over and above for us and were just amazing!" adds JoAnn. "The housekeepers took turns working for me so I could stay in La Crosse with Les. One night, he was having blood pressure issues and the nurse stayed right by him until they got that back under control. They brought in an air mattress so I could stay right in the room with him. They did all the things you just don't realize are so important until you need them."

When he could finally return home, Les again had the services of Community and Home Care. "Home Health helped me so much to keep him at home. Summer Garin, Katie Rathbun, Deb Hanson, Juli Viet and the team helped save his life to get him where he needed to be. They even brought him into the ER one day when they found an infection and I was working. Les has also used the ambulance services and they were magnificent!"

Les continues to recover in the comfort of his own home with the help of Home Care. He adds, "I never had any bad experiences. I never knew I was claustrophobic until I needed an MRI, and the techs at the hospital were amazing. The food was outstanding. I could have eaten the cook's homemade tomato soup three times a day! It was the only thing that tasted good to me. The entire staff are all just good people."

JoAnn concludes, "Veterans Memorial Hospital has always helped us when we were in big predicaments. We are so lucky to have a place like this around here. They went above and beyond. We weren't just a number...they were our other family. Even if I had never worked there, I know they would have treated us just the same!"

# Christmas Fantasy



Christmas Fantasy ... Continued from Page 1

## 2025 FANTASY SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### "TINGLE 'N MINGLE" HAPPY HOUR

This event is a special opportunity to meet socially with friends and co-workers. Many hearty hors d'oeuvres, desserts, candies, breads and spirits will be served among the trees from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Friday, November 14. The cost is \$25 per person and includes two drink tickets, a "green jello" shot in conjunction with the theme, and unlimited, hearty hors d'oeuvres throughout the evening. Advance tickets are available at Veterans Memorial Hospital or at the door.

### WINE, CHEESE AND DESSERT EVENT

Saturday evening, November 15, will host a special wine, cheese and dessert event sponsored by Eagle's Landing Winery of Marquette, Empty Nest Winery of Waukon and Madigan Winery of Lansing. The event will begin at 7:00 p.m. Reservations are required for this event, as seats are limited. Please call 563-568-4177 to make a reservation. The cost for each ticket is \$25 per person, which includes wine, cheese, meats, cheese curds and spreads, crackers, dessert, and viewing of the decorations and auction.

### BRUNCH WITH SANTA

For the second year, brunch will be offered on Sunday, November 16, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, serving a large, full brunch with a cash Mimosa and Bloody Mary bar. This event is sponsored by the Allamakee Pork Producers. Please make a reservation by calling 563-568-4177. Tickets are \$15 per adult, \$10 for children under 12, and free for preschoolers and under. Santa will also be available for visits and photos!

### MONDAY LUNCHEON

One luncheon will be held this year on Monday, November 17, and will again be sponsored by the Allamakee County Cattlemen. Please call 563-568-4177 to make a reservation. The cost is \$25 per person.

### VISITS AND PHOTOS WITH SANTA CLAUS

Santa will be available for a visit anytime Sunday, November 16, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Be ready with your cameras for a great photo opportunity!

### GENERAL VIEWING

The Christmas Fantasy 2025 event will be open to the public Saturday, November 15, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, November 16, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; and Monday, November 17, from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. Complimentary Christmas treats and hot chocolate will be available during all these public showings. Tickets are just \$5 each and \$2 for children ages 12 and under.

The 34th Annual Christmas Fantasy is planned and sponsored by the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation including Rose Beardmore, Sue Blagsvedt, Vicki Bloxham, Kris Coté, Chris Engstrom-Fosaaen, Patty Goltz, Kevin Hanson, Judy Herman, Sue Kratz, Ardie Kuhse, Craig Lensing, Reid Mahoney, Becky Mitchell, Larry Schellhammer, Barb Shull, Sue Stamper, Jeremy Strub, Kim Sylvester and Matt Teslow.



2025 CHRISTMAS FANTASY THEME:

## A Christmas Vacation

### FRIDAY, NOV. 14

#### TINGLE 'N MINGLE HAPPY HOUR

- 5:00-8:00 pm
- \$25 Per Person
- NEW! Live Auction 7:00 pm

### SATURDAY, NOV. 15

#### CHRISTMAS TREATS & COCOA

- 10:00 am-2:00 pm
- \$5 Per Adult, Ages 12 & Under \$2, Preschool Age & Younger Free

#### WINE, CHEESE & DESSERT

*Sponsored by Eagles Landing Winery, Empty Nest Winery & Madigan Winery*

- 7:00-9:00 pm
- \$25 Per Person
- Call 563-568-4177 for Reservations

### SUNDAY, NOV. 16

#### BRUNCH WITH SANTA

*Sponsored by Allamakee County Pork Producers*

- 9:00 am-12:00 pm
- \$15 Per Adult, Ages 12 & Under \$10, Preschool Age & Younger Free
- Call 563-568-4177 for Reservations

#### CHRISTMAS TREATS & COCOA

- 9:00 am-3:00 pm
- \$5 Per Adult, Ages 12 & Under \$2, Preschool Age & Younger Free
- Visits & Photos with Santa

### MONDAY, NOV. 17

#### NOON FANTASY LUNCHEON

*Sponsored by Allamakee County Cattlemen*

- \$25 Per Person
- Call 563-568-4177 for Reservations

#### CHRISTMAS TREATS & COCOA

- 2:00-6:00 pm
- \$5 Per Adult, Ages 12 & Under \$2, Preschool Age & Younger Free

# HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS FANTASY

Marge Strike of Waukon was the driving force behind the birth of the annual Christmas Fantasy and has been involved all 34 years! The event's locations have evolved over the years starting in 1992 at the Waukon Vet's Club, then moving to the Farmers & Merchants Bank Community Room (which is now the FreedomBank location), followed by the old Martin Furniture building (currently the Steel Cow location), to the Drawing Board (currently the Waukon Veterinary Clinic), and finally to the Allamakee Fairgrounds Pavilion in 1997, where it has remained and has proved to be the perfect venue for this annual festival!

Marge remembers, "Our first Christmas Fantasy consisted of only 15 trees located in the upstairs of the Vet's Club, but we couldn't set up for the event until later on Friday night when Waldron's were done serving their Friday night fish special! We were open only Saturday night and Sunday afternoon, and then it was over. Vivian Huffman played piano, and Merlin Kruger served wine in his nice suit with the white towel over his arm. That Foundation was a great group of people!"

"The next year, we moved it to the community room at Farmers and Merchants Bank, then the following year to the Martin Bros. old furniture building. It was great to have the choirs lined up on the stairway to sing. Quillins Food Ranch always gave us real trees for the event, and the housekeepers from the hospital had to go there following the event to try to get the pine needles out of the shag carpeting!"

"The Fairgrounds is the perfect location for the large and versatile event. I am so thrilled the event is still going on so successfully year after year. We thank all of those generous, creative people who bring it to life every year!"



Christmas Fantasy 1995, which took place in the old Drawing Board which is now the Waukon Veterinary Clinic location.



A scene from the second annual Christmas Fantasy, November 28, 1993. A total of 22 trees were on display this second year. The Fantasy now boasts nearly 60 trees each year, along with over 100 silent auction items!



A scene of Christmas Fantasy 1994 from the stairway in the Martin Furniture Building, currently the Steel Cow in downtown Waukon.



A view of the Waukon Lions Club tree at this second annual Christmas Fantasy! Pictured, left to right, are Marvin "Bud" Strike, Tom Hansmeier and DuWayne "Dewey" Smitker. The Waukon Lions Club continues to decorate a Christmas tree for the Fantasy each year, thanks to the dedication of Gwen Schroedel.

# *A Lifetime of Care:* **Arlin and Fran Schager's Gratitude for Dr. McMullan and VMH**

Arlin and Fran Schager of Postville have been loyal patients of Dr. Tom McMullan and the Postville Medical Clinic, as well as Veterans Memorial Hospital since they moved here in 1969 to manage Iowa Turkey Products in Postville.

After Dr. McMullan and his wife, Dr. Gloria Blanco, arrived in town, Gloria was required to return to her home country of the Philippines as to her Visa requirements. The townspeople were very concerned that Dr. McMullan and Gloria may never return and did everything they could at the state level to try to overturn this step in her citizenship.

Arlin, along with Don Olson, were especially instrumental in keeping Dr. McMullan in town. "I even traveled to Des Moines and insisted upon seeing Governor Branstad to share our concerns, but was never able to meet with him face to face," explains Arlin. "Gloria did travel back to her home country and thankfully returned to Postville once again where they both cared for the Postville community for over 40 years."

"I have always considered Doc a good friend and have appreciated all he has done for my family and me. We loved it when he would come to our home for Christmas. My kids could never beat him at our trivia games, though. He is a very smart man!"

"When we moved here, our children were very little and we utilized the Postville Hospital until it closed in 1990," explains Fran. "We began doing all of our hospital care in Waukon and were thankful Dr. McMullan was there as well."

"We have had so many services given to us by the hospital over the years. Our son had his tonsils out there with some bleeding complications, but they took amazing care of him," continues Fran. "One year, I found a lump in my breast and came to the hospital for a mammogram. I was able to have my lumpectomy done right there and it was so convenient."



*Arlin and Fran Schager of Postville with Rehabilitation Staff members Dacia Johnson at left and Brad Krambeer standing in back.*

Arlin has had all of his care at VMH over the years and even had an extended stay of 10 days nearly two years ago to regulate his back pain medication. He continues currently with physical therapy and sees Dr. Thompson in Podiatry regularly for his foot care.

"We know so many of the staff and really enjoy them. Natalie Kelly, Deb Zuercher, and Teresa Troendle Schaefers are some of the best, and Brad Krambeer and Dacia Johnson are always so fun and helpful in therapy," adds Arlin.

"We are so happy that Veterans Memorial Hospital has taken over Dr. McMullan's Clinic as he retires to ensure we still have that great care right in town," adds Fran. "A new, larger clinic is a wonderful idea and we are very excited for it!"

"I especially want to thank Dr. McMullan for all that he has done for the community of Postville, and especially our family," concludes Arlin. "I have appreciated his service and friendship for all these years."

**DONATE**



## **Donate to Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation**

Go to [veteransmemorialhospital.com](http://veteransmemorialhospital.com) Click **Donate Today**

# Gifts

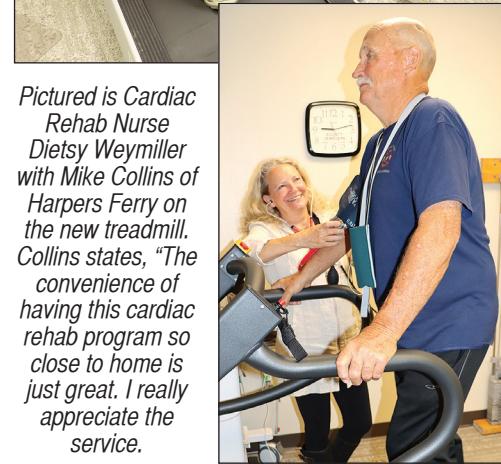
The following generously responded with a monetary gift to the Foundation's 2024 Winter mail request. The funds raised upgraded the treadmill in our cardiac rehab.

IMO = In Memory of  
IHO = In Honor of

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IMO Ray Burke				

# NEW CARDIAC TREADMILL

Purchased Thanks to  
Successful 2024 Campaign!



Pictured is Cardiac Rehab Nurse Dietsy Weymiller with Mike Collins of Harpers Ferry on the new treadmill. Collins states, "The convenience of having this cardiac rehab program so close to home is just great. I really appreciate the service."

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The Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation thanks all of the numerous donors who contributed to the 2024 direct mail campaign, raising over \$30,000 for the purchase of this new treadmill for our Cardiac Rehabilitation program. This treadmill upgrade enables us to offer accurate and timely cardiac testing and rehabilitation locally, equipping our medical team with advanced monitoring features for clearer results, greater accuracy, and enhanced patient safety and comfort.

Our comprehensive stress testing services evaluate heart health and guide treatment decisions. We provide standard treadmill stress testing, nuclear treadmill stress testing, and non-exercise nuclear stress testing, allowing us to meet the physical needs of a variety of patients in our community.

We also utilize our stress testing system to exercise patients who participate in our cardiac rehab, pulmonary rehab, and peripheral artery disease programs.

# The Great Need for a NEW POSTVILLE MEDICAL CLINIC

Our Chief Executive Officer, Michael Coyle, announced plans for a new Postville Medical Clinic at the Postville City Council meeting on Monday night, August 11, which was received with a round of applause from all attending! There are several reasons why a new clinic is needed, but the main issue is the lack of space to accommodate the growing number of patients each day.

"Our Postville Medical Clinic has been growing so well, going from two patients a day up to 16 per day. We now average nine to 10 patients a day and can no longer advertise walk-in appointments," says Laura Baxter, Director of the Waukon and Postville Clinics. "Our provider appointment slots are full most every day, and we have so much more demand in both family health care and behavioral health care. Fortunately, we have new providers beginning to care for our Postville patients, but we have nowhere to put them. So we are very anxious to get this project underway."

Our current Postville Medical Clinic is located at 124 W. Greene Street. The new location is right next door, to the west, in the former Upper Explorerland Building. The new clinic will have an additional three exam rooms, bringing the total to five, plus a new procedure room and lab area. There will also be a new behavioral health clinic area for private consultations in a more comfortable, confidential atmosphere.

"The current providers we have at the Postville Medical Clinic will remain. Plus, we have added Hannah Kelly, NP, and

Angie Taylor, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, to the mix, so on many days we have two providers available, instead of just one. Plus, we have a behavioral health nurse visiting the clinic each week, instead of every other week. The expansion will allow us to accept walk-in patients again and expand our hours, opening earlier in the morning and staying open all day without closing for lunch. Overall, we will be able to truly provide access to quality health care here at home."

The hospital has funding for \$480,000 of the total \$779,000 needed for the project. While donations are coming in nicely, additional donations and grants are still needed for the remaining balance of the project.



COMING  
SOON

**Postville  
Medical Clinic  
NEW  
LOCATION**

**Current Location:**  
124 W. Greene St.  
Postville

**New Location  
Coming Soon:**  
134 W. Greene St.  
Postville

# POSTVILLE CLINIC STAFF SHARE THE GREAT NEED FOR A NEW CLINIC



## Alex Berns, Nurse Practitioner

*"Updating the clinic shows that we are invested in the community and county long-term. Being born and raised in the Postville community and now practicing here, I want our patients in Postville and the surrounding communities to have exceptional resources and experiences in all of our clinic locations."*



## Katy Maker, Nurse Midwife and Nurse Practitioner

*"Patients deserve privacy in their medical setting and we want to give that to them. Our current clinic spaces do not have a quality sound barrier between rooms and our exam rooms are very small. It's very difficult for people with walkers or wheelchairs or any kind of mobility issues to move around in those rooms. I think it is important for the community to feel comfortable when they come into*

*the clinic and feel that their medical needs are confidential. Postville is a community of families and we need rooms large enough to accommodate an entire family when they want to stay together. Plus we need space that has ADA bathrooms, which we do not have right now. These changes will offer a better patient experience."*



## Minji Ransom, Nurse Practitioner

*"As a Family Nurse Practitioner working in Postville, I see every day how much this community values and needs quality healthcare. While our current clinic has served us well, it simply isn't meeting the needs of our growing and diverse patient population. Space is limited, and we often have to work around the building's constraints to provide even basic services.*

*These challenges make it harder to expand programs, add new providers, or offer additional resources that our patients need. A new clinic would give us the space to better support interpreter services, preventative health programs, and community partnerships—all of which improve care and strengthen trust. I love working here because the people are resilient, warm, and deeply appreciative of the care they receive. A new clinic wouldn't just be a building—it would be an investment in the health and future of Postville, ensuring that every person who walks through our doors receives the best care possible."*



## Sandy Lopez, Medical Assistant

*"I grew up in Postville and having a clinic close to home is especially important. Now that I am a certified medical translator and can interpret for our patients, we can connect with them so much more than an online translator or over the phone. But we definitely need more space for this clinic. We keep bringing in new patients every week and often our three rooms are full, so they have*

*to wait. Appointments take longer than they should, so with more rooms, it would give us more opportunity to see more patients."*



## Selena Perez, Medical Assistant

*"We need a new clinic! We have no room here. It's not good when we can't get people in and they are waiting for our rooms to open up. That makes our patients wait too long. We are very tight and with more room we could care for so many more people than we can now. I wanted to come here when I had the opportunity since I live in Postville because I just really wanted to be here to*

*care for the people in my town. Our patients are excited to see you and they are always thanking you for caring for them. I have made some great friendships. We are just so busy and we really need more room."*

## We Invite You to Support the Postville Clinic Building Project with a Donation.

### Your gift will:

1. Expand access to mental health and primary care by adding three new providers and increasing exam rooms from two to five.
2. Provide expanded, consistent service hours Mondays-Fridays (in the past three years, we have only closed twice—once due to a snowstorm and once for a provider delayed at the airport).
3. Ensure seamless access to Veterans Memorial Hospital, just 20 minutes away.
4. Create local jobs and boost our economy.
5. Offer a modern, welcoming space.

**Gifts can be payable to:** Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation & mailed to 40 First St. SE, Waukon, IA 52172.

*Your gift is tax deductible and will help us fulfill our mission of enhancing the lives of those we serve by providing an exceptional healthcare experience with compassion.*

# Reflections from Our 30+ YEAR LOYAL STAFF MEMBERS



**Denise Wullner**  
Business Office  
**35 YEARS**

My time at VMH actually began in 1964 when I was born here, but my career began in 1990 with the Allamakee Public Health Department. In 1995, we merged with Veterans Memorial Hospital and formed the Community and Home Care Department, where I worked until 2005, when I moved to the Business Office. There was no room to move us from the courthouse into the hospital until the building and remodeling project was completed in 2000, which was amazing to be involved with.

I would say technology has been the double-edged sword that has made the most improvements in the years I have been

here. When I began in the Home Care Department, we typed all of our insurance claim forms on an actual typewriter. We had a data entry system (AS400) that gave us reports with the information we needed to bill, and we would manually enter that information on the claim forms. Now that is all automated and you just expect the correct information to magically appear where it should!

Insurance companies and plan changes over the years have been another big change. Back in the late 90s to early 2000s, we didn't have the Medicaid MCOs; we just dealt with Iowa Medicaid. There were no Medicare Advantage Plans; it was just Medicare. Things were easier to understand and coverage really didn't change much. That is not the case in the current world!

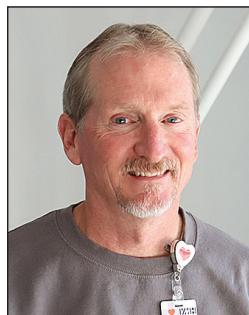
Overall, I am very grateful to have been employed at the hospital for so many years and have really enjoyed what I do. For the most part, I have worked with many great people here through the years who have helped make this job not feel like a job most of the time. We've experienced great losses of staff and also celebrated many accomplishments along the way.



**Beth Fitzpatrick**  
Laboratory  
**36 YEARS**

I have been privileged to be part of the VMH team for over 36 years. Our staff is exceptional and caring and has always tried to serve the community's healthcare needs. In the beginning, my lab services were mainly for inpatients or emergencies. We had the main inpatient floor and beds on the third floor for acute care. Increasingly, our community is now served with many outpatient treatments or screenings, keeping our lab very busy!

Technology in the lab has changed how tests are analyzed and the time it takes to perform them. Maintenance on instruments was a large part of our day. For example, a blood sodium test was analyzed on a flame photometer, which involved setting up an analyzer that had a fuel tank and flame. A sodium test could be analyzed on a one-time-use cartridge. The lab orders came on paper and were delivered to the patient floor. Computer technology has definitely saved time! That same test plus many others that used to take 45 minutes, are now down to 10!



**Brad Krambeer**  
Rehabilitation  
**32 YEARS**

When I started at VMH in 1993, we had a staff of four. The In-Patient Therapy Department was located in the basement on the northeast corner of the building and our Out-Patient Therapy Department was located on the south side of town where Allamakee County Extension is located. I worked both outpatient and inpatient treatments, along with managing Healthy Lifestyles Center and coverage for the Indian football and wrestling practices and games. In the mid-90s, my current boss, Amy Robinson, was hired to assist our Therapy Department and has worked here now for 29 years. We have grown our

current Therapy Department to 13 staff members, providing coverage for PT, OT, AT, and ST. I have stayed here for the simple reason of wanting to take care of and give back to my community while watching my kids spend time with my parents. I have survived four administrators over my 33 years, with Mike Myers being my all-time favorite. I have watched many of my co-workers retire or leave VMH over the past 5 years and miss their experience and camaraderie. We have a lot of young and new faces and hope they continue to learn and grow as they work here at VMH.



**Machelle Bulman**  
Nursing  
**44 YEARS**

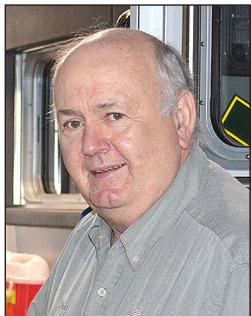
Wow, things have really changed in nursing since I graduated! We never had disposable equipment... everything was washed or sterilized. I remember cleaning glass syringes and the needles before they had to be sterilized, running my fingers along the needle to make sure there were no burrs. We would have to wash out urinals and bedpans to be reused. We didn't have gloves to start IVs, give shots, clean wounds, or help patients in the bathroom and today that all sounds pretty disgusting! We would chart everything on paper and today it is all on computers.

Nurses were mostly assistants to physicians...they gave us orders and we followed them. Nursing today has grown so much! Nurses are the provider's eyes and ears making them an intricate part of the team...our observations, ideas and our reports to the provider enhance patient care and the patient's well-being. Whether a patient is at VMH or in La Crosse, providers and nursing staff have that information at their fingertips...amazing! Patients are educated about their health so much better today and they can look at their chart whenever they want.

In my 44 years of nursing, I feel I have been very blessed to know and care for many patients...they have made a difference in my life! My amazing peers and coworkers have helped me learn, grow, and be the best nurse I can be. They have enriched my life and I am so grateful. Make a difference - Be a Nurse!

## A JOURNEY OF DEDICATION

# Reflections from Our 30+ YEAR LOYAL STAFF MEMBERS



**Jim Ryan**  
EMT  
**39 YEARS**

When I first moved to town and started on the ambulance in 1986, we had two van-type ambulances that were kept underneath City Hall, and when there was a call, we had to go there to get the ambulance out. Around 1986, we added the current ambulance garage by the hospital. Not too long after, we purchased our first Type I ambulance. We now have three ambulances with paramedics, which has definitely expanded the care.

I joined the Maintenance Department in 1991. The building and renovation project started in 1999 and took nearly 3 years to complete, adding on to both sides

of the hospital and remodeling pretty much every part in between. Plus, the heating and cooling system was so antiquated, we really needed to do something there. We had just three maintenance staff at that time, then went to four. It has grown more since, with all the acquired campuses they now have to cover. I then retired from Maintenance in 2017 but have remained active as an EMT ever since.



**Chris Dahlstrom**  
EMT  
**31 YEARS**

When I started as an EMT in 1994, all of our run reports were on paper. Now everything is on the computer. I appreciate working at VMH because of the personal interactions with our local people and families. Even though I have always had a full-time job somewhere else, I have still made myself as available as possible to take ambulance calls and help the local community. The amazing staff that I have had the pleasure of working with, both present and past, have been outstanding.



**Jamie Bieber**  
Business Office  
**30 YEARS**

A lifetime of employment with one employer. I have had the privilege to work this job my entire 30-year career, close to home, to know and befriend many wonderful patients and co-workers, and to serve the community that I live in. I have had to overcome many obstacles and changes that I have lost count, but my job has always been fulfilling and challenging.

It has been both exciting and scary to watch the hospital grow, but I think that we are moving in the right direction. The hospital has faced some rough times over the years and always seems to weather it. I believe we are a strong entity with a

resilient staff, which is constantly evolving to meet the needs of every person who walks through the doors. I hope VMH will stand long after I am gone, because I have always believed it is truly needed.



**Diane Allison**  
Nursing  
**47 YEARS**

During my work experience at VMH, I have seen so many changes. There is always room for improvement in healthcare, a new medication, improved methods of documentation, and always a better way to care for our patients, to keep them safe and improve their health.

What has remained unchanged in my experiences at VMH is how the staff of nurses, doctors, paramedics, EMTs, lab, surgery, and every other department are dedicated to caring for the people who walk through the doors of our hospital.

I have had the privilege to work alongside some very impressive, talented professionals. These people helped me to become a better nurse and person. I only hope that I have been able to somehow impact someone's life in a positive way, as my patients and the people that I have had the privilege to work with have impacted mine.



**Erin Berns**  
Public Relations  
**32 YEARS**

I began at VMH, sharing one computerized typewriter with four other staff, saving our work on floppy discs. We had only the local newspaper, radio, direct mail and phone books for advertising media. Today, our loyal newspaper and radio resources are still so effective, but we've added social media, digital signage, video, website, etc., plus this Fountains of Health newsletter! I love writing about our staff and patients in this newsletter—I can't thank the people enough who continually agree to share their stories with us—your words are priceless!

I enjoyed the 22 years I was also the Human Resource Director, meeting all the candidates and working so closely with staff, but I am so thankful to have returned to only Public Relations and focus on all these new ways to market our incredible staff and services! I was born here, as was my husband, and all three of our children and now our first grandchild...my parents' first and very last date was here... it's great to work for such an awesome place with such a purpose. The job does not matter....it's having the hospital here that does!

CELEBRATING  
**75 YEARS**  
1950-2025  
of Care

DECADES OF IMPACT



# Expanded Behavioral Health Care Team!

Because of the overwhelming need for mental health care, both Janet Hunter and Angela Taylor have joined Tara Fink in providing these services in both our Waukon and Postville Clinics!



**Janet Hunter,**  
**Psychiatric Mental Health**  
**Nurse Practitioner**

Janet joined our Behavioral Health Clinic in mid-October, allowing us to expand our mental health services locally.

"While I was taking a women's health course, my sister was diagnosed with cancer. Sharing what I was learning with her sparked a deep interest in health promotion, particularly in women's health, and ultimately led me to change my major. As part of that program, I completed an internship with the Wellness Department at Luther College, which grew into a 20+ year partnership addressing student health issues. Mental health quickly emerged as the most pressing need," explains Janet. "I saw students waiting months—sometimes a year—to see a provider for medication management. Too often, that delay meant they weren't able to thrive academically or personally and sometimes had to step away from school. Those experiences motivated me to pursue my PMHNP licensure so I could combine my passion for prevention with the ability to provide treatment. Becoming a healthcare provider felt like the most direct way to remove barriers, support students and communities, and help people thrive."

Janet is excited to bring more focus to mental health and wellness in the area communities. She adds, "Too often these are overlooked in primary care, yet they have such a profound impact on overall health. Offering integrated support—whether through screening, counseling, or connecting patients to resources—feels like an essential service for the community. I truly feel grateful to be part of such a welcoming community and hospital."



**Angie Taylor**

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

**Tara Fink**

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

**Janet Hunter**

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner



**Angie Taylor,**  
**Psychiatric Mental Health**  
**Nurse Practitioner**

A second new Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, Angie, joined our team on October 27, for a total of three behavioral health providers to help meet the great demand for these services. Angie sees patients in both the Waukon Clinic and the Postville Clinic.

Angie spent the last nearly 25 years as a nurse at the Regional Medical Center in Manchester, where she worked a variety of nursing roles in emergency, med-surg, obstetrics, outpatient psychiatry, and leadership. She chose to become a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) to provide a positive impact and improve the quality of life for individuals and the community.

"Years of nursing has taught me how mental well-being affects multiple aspects of one's life, including physical health," states Angie. "Behavioral health is an expanding service. I am excited to see how we can best meet the community's needs and what services will be offered in the future. The warmth and compassion of the VMH team, along with a progressive, rural environment, is what drew me to this facility."

This stronger, accessible behavioral health team of Angie, Janet Hunter and Tara Fink will work with anyone of any age. Typically, in the first appointment, these providers will conduct a roughly hour-long assessment to formulate a diagnosis, after which the patient will receive psychoeducation and treatment options, including suggestions for natural treatments and lifestyle changes, as well as prescribed medication, when needed.

Patients can self-refer to see Angie, Janet or Tara by calling the Waukon Clinic at 563-568-5530 or the Postville Clinic at 563-864-7221 to set up an appointment.

# Meet Our NEW PROVIDERS



## Dr. John Swords, Family Physician, Waukon Clinic

We welcome Dr. John Swords to our medical staff! Dr. Swords is a graduate of the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences and the University of Wisconsin, Madison and was recently a family practice physician with the Palmetto Primary Care Physicians

clinics in South Carolina. Before becoming a physician, Dr. Swords devoted his career to the United States Army. Dr. Swords was born and raised in Lancaster, PA. After watching his parents age and become sick, he chose to further his career as a health care provider.

"I watched both of my parents age and become sick. I felt that the healthcare system was lacking and wanted to be there for other people and their families to give them the care I believed they deserved," explains Dr. Swords. "I wanted to be in primary care since that allows me to follow my patients from cradle to grave. I felt that this specialty gave me the best opportunity to fulfill my wish of being there for others, giving them the care they deserve."

"I have always liked the Midwest and just love the wide-open spaces. I am especially drawn to that feeling of warmth and the easy-going atmosphere of the people in the Midwest. You can just feel that all around you," adds Dr. Swords. "I am also excited to live in a small town again. This area is not only beautiful, but the small-town feel is everywhere. From the moment I set foot in town, I fell in love with it. Before the interview even started, I already knew I wanted to practice in Waukon. The charm of the people and the area sold me right away!"

Dr. Swords is available to see patients of all ages, but has a few areas of special interest.

"I have a particular love for taking care of my older adults. I believe that annual physical exams or annual wellness visits are essential in catching disease processes early to initiate

treatment for improved outcomes," he explains. "I will also be working closely with my colleagues at VMH to start a new program for medically assisted treatment. Substance use disorder (SUD) is not something that only returning soldiers with PTSD contend with regularly. SUD is rampant in our civilian society, and I hope to use everything I've learned about this illness to help my patients fully recover and live a self-directed life."

Make your appointment now to see Dr. John Swords at the Waukon Clinic! He will begin seeing patients in mid-November.



## Hannah (Gesing) Kelly, Nurse Practitioner, Waukon & Postville Clinic

We also welcome Hannah to our family practice team, serving clinic patients in both the Waukon and Postville Clinic locations. She is offering care for all ages and will have same-day appointments available for

all acute patients.

Hannah grew up on a family livestock and crop farm south of Waukon. She has nearly a decade of nursing experience in a variety of areas while finishing her family nurse practitioner master's program these past two years.

"I decided to become a family nurse practitioner to continue to care for a variety of demographics of patients in a different setting. I have always loved the variety and unpredictability of nursing, and family practice is able to provide this," states Hannah. "I also look forward to being able to develop long-term patient relationships that have not been possible in my previous roles. I honestly enjoy and look forward to all the different areas of family practice. I love seeing families and am particularly interested in women's health and pediatrics. I still consider Waukon my hometown, of course! I know how hardworking and kindhearted the people of Allamakee County are, and I am happy to be able to provide care to them."

**We look forward to welcoming Mason (Hermeier) Kerian, NP, to our Waukon & Postville Family Practice team in early January!**

## Call & Schedule an Appointment Today!

VMH Waukon Clinic (563) 568-5530 • VMH Postville Clinic (563) 864-7221



# SAVING A LIFE: A Play-by-Play

AS TOLD BY VICKI HEILMANN, MONONA EMT

"One Thursday night in July, we had a call outside Luana. Steve Hendricks was our driver, and EMTs Melanie (Mel) Cahoon and I were the on-call crew. Dispatch reported a male experiencing shortness of breath. When we got on scene, the patient was sitting on a chair at his kitchen table with an obvious breathing issue. We checked his SPO2 and heart rate immediately with our oximeter and placed him on high-volume oxygen. We wasted no time getting him onto our cot and loading him into the ambulance. We had called in an intercept from the Veterans Memorial Hospital ambulance before leaving his house.

As soon as we got into the ambulance, we switched him to onboard oxygen and began getting his vitals on the LifePak. Suddenly, he was not breathing, so I inserted an oral airway device into his throat to help him breathe. Then we grabbed the ambu bag and started breathing for him. Within a couple of minutes, his heart stopped and Mel started manual chest compressions. I asked the driver, Steve, to call Veterans Memorial Hospital and tell them manual CPR is in progress so they could be ready when we arrived. Mel and I were doing CPR for about 10 minutes when the patient had Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC), meaning his heart was working again, so we continued to help him breathe with the airway and ambu bag.

We were very happy to meet our intercept team, paramedics Cheryl Livingston and Claire Butchkoski, and we told them the second they opened the back door to the



Pictured left to right are Melanie (Mel) Cahoon, Steve Hendricks and Vicki Heilmann, Monona EMS.

ambulance that we brought him back! The lady paramedics took over the care, and then Mel and I, the EMTs, assisted on the way to Veterans Memorial Hospital. After taking the patient into the ER Department, an entire team met us in the hall. Within minutes, we could hear the helicopter flying in to transport our patient to the cardiac unit as fast as possible.

When we were able to return to the ambulance, we started to wipe down everything inside while giving each other a high five! It was an amazing feeling to be a part of saving someone's life!

The driver has a great deal of responsibility because we'd never get to the hospital if it weren't for our dedicated ambulance drivers. It takes the whole team for every single call and it was an awesome job by all involved."



Left to right is Becky Krambeer, NP, Emergency Room Medical Provider, and Cheryl Livingston and Claire Butchkoski, Paramedics, who intercepted the Monona ambulance and together transported this patient to the ER.



## Have You Been Thinking about Giving Back to Your Community?

- Have you wanted to learn more about what to do in medical emergencies?
- Have you felt that adding purpose to your free time is important?

**Achieve both by becoming an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)!**

*The next NICC EMT class, held at Veterans Memorial Hospital in Waukon, starts in January! For more information, please see the NICC Facebook page, or contact instructor Cheryl Livingston, Paramedic, at the hospital at 563-568-3411!*

## Hospital History - Marlene Dahstrom & Cathy Larson

Marlene Dahlstrom and Cathy Larson both dedicated their lives to Veterans Memorial Hospital. Marlene began her 47-year history as a C.N.A., taking the course right at the hospital, taught by Esther Sunderman, Director of Nursing, and then later became a Ward Clerk on the patient floor.

Cathy started as a candy striper for her first two years until she turned 16 and could be a nurse's aide, and remembers making \$.75 an hour, which she felt was good money. Then, later became an LPN and worked a total of 44 years. With 92 years of experience between the two of them, they share many of the same fond memories from the 1970s on.

"When we first came, the hospital was owned by the Good Samaritan Society. Reverend Adams would get on the loudspeaker every morning and give us all orders and everyone heard it in both the hospital and Good Sam. The main 2nd floor was known as the 'dirty' floor with the infectious and surgical patients, and the non-contagious 'clean' floor was up on the third. All rooms would be full all the time and we often had partitions set up with beds in the hallways. Even OB was so busy, it was nothing to have five or six moms all the time. We only had three people (two LPNs and one aide) working the floor with one RN in the building who had to run ER, OB, Surgery ... wherever needed!"

We used to do rounds every two hours every night, on all floors, checking doors, putting our hands up against them to make sure they weren't hot due to fire. Once we found that Medical Records was flooding due to a broken water pipe. Another night, we found one of Dr. Stull's surgical patients sitting in the waiting room, still waiting for their appointment with him that day! One night, Helen Plein told us to call the cops because there were people in the supply room—she could see their heads. Phil Young came and found the heads were from the outdoor Christmas Nativity Scene, but he laughed and said 'No problem, call anytime you need to!' The police were always very good to us!

Backrubs were always offered to all patients every night. In the morning, when they woke up, we got them out of bed, washed them up and in their chair ready for breakfast before the day shift came on. We went around to each patient as a team and each did our thing.

Surgical patients would come in the night before and stay here and we would prep them and get them ready the next morning with a special soap. Anyone who had a baby stayed a week!

Charting at that time was all paper, not electronic like it is now. We had 3 colors of ink we used for the 3 different shifts. The day shift used blue ink, the PM shift used black ink and the night

shift used red ink. We had to remember to change our ink pens at the shift change. There were no computers. If any medication was needed, we had to mix it ourselves. There was no pharmacy and no machine that dispensed the right dosage. IVs were in glass bottles and we had to sit and count the drips to figure out the dosage in cc's per hour. The shift coming on would stand to hear the report and those going off would sit down. A couple of times, nurses fainted from standing so long!

Anyone could smoke in the hospital, even patients, unless they were on oxygen. Some of the doctors would go up and down the halls smoking their cigar or pipe. Each doctor had their time slot to do rounds, so we always knew when they were coming.

Mary Riley was a mentor to us all. She always said we should learn one new thing a day and we did. We always had to wear white, but during Nurses Week, we could wear a different color and it was so nice!

The Gilberts ran the ambulance service with their station wagon and they were on call all the time. When the helicopters began to come in, it was a big deal. Once a helicopter came in and we had an ice storm while it was here and couldn't leave. It was here for almost a week and one of the pilots had to stay here the entire time. We joked that we were holding it for ransom!

That 1975 addition to the hospital was a big deal when they added on the ER and X-ray area. It adjoined the hospital right behind the Nurse's Station and we literally just had a tarp between us and the outdoors. We had cats, dogs, mice, etc., come in and we had to shoo them out! It was quite the deal, but it was a great addition when it was all done.

For all those years, the hospital was our family and it still is. Many of us retired people get together for luncheons every month and we are still a family. It's where we 'lived' half of our lives. We knew everyone. We never went to a patient's room number, we went to that patient's room. And when we would see them again downtown, we would always speak to one another. They were all very special years."



*Cathy and Marlene, pictured in 2015, receiving their longevity awards!*



*Current photo of Marlene and Cathy in a hospital patient room.*

# MEDICAL STAFF

Dave Schwartz, MD  
John Swords, MD  
Thomas McMullan, MD  
Susan McMillan, ARNP  
Minji Ransom, ARNP  
Alex Berns, ARNP  
Katy Maker, ARNP, CNM  
Hannah Kelly, ARNP  
Tara Fink, PMHNP  
Janet Hunter, PMHNP  
Angela Taylor, PMHNP  
William Specht, ARNP (ER)  
Becky Krambeer, ARNP (ER)  
Robert Giese, PA (ER)  
John Kelly, ARNP (ER)  
Raquel Ristau, PA  
Chelsey Sherburne, ARNP  
Laura Keatley, ARNP  
Halie Ruff, ARNP  
Katy Grangaard, ARNP  
Mathew Snitker, ARNP  
Sherri Schilling, MD  
Catherine Nelson, MD

**Optometry**  
Morgan Smerud, OD

**Pain Clinic**  
Shawn Blake, CRNA

**Cardiology**  
Gundersen Cardiologists

**Pathology**  
Gundersen Pathologists

**Radiology**  
Gundersen Radiologists

**Surgery**  
Phillip Yee, MD  
Chris Winters, MD  
Michael LaBelle, MD  
Elleson Schurtz, MD

**Dentistry**  
Jessica Wilke, DDS

**Podiatry**  
Kristina Thompson, DPM  
Greg Valkosky, DPM  
Craig Sullivan, DPM  
Brooke Tappe, DPM

**Anesthesiology**  
Mark Bishop, CRNA  
Skip Loebig, CRNA  
Shawn Blake, CRNA  
Ben Levinson, CRNA  
Todd Schissel, CRNA

**Sleep Study**  
Courtney Whitney, DO  
Adriana Escandon Sandino, MD

**Telemedicine Services**  
ER Telehealth  
Telepsyche  
Telestroke  
NeoNet  
Pediatric Critical Care

Veterans Memorial Hospital  
40 First St. SE  
Waukon, IA 52172

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**MISSION:** VMH enhances the lives of those we serve by providing an exceptional healthcare experience with compassion.

**VISION:** VMH will be a premier health facility and a leader in fostering a healthy community through innovation, excellence, stewardship, and commitment to the people we serve throughout their lifetime.



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