



**VETERANS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
& CLINICS**

**Spring
2025**



Photo by C. Livingston

FOUNTAINS OF HEALTH

Bandmates, Brothers and Friends Return May 9

with Special Guest: **JayR Brink Band**

For the third year, Bandmates, Brothers and Friends (BBF) will reunite in Waukon for another night of outstanding musical entertainment to benefit the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation! This year, the musical lineup will also feature The JayR Brink Band, performing on Friday evening, May 9, from 6 to 11 p.m. at the Allamakee Fairgrounds Pavilion.

The first set of BBF members will take the stage to begin the night, offering a variety of older country music, with a second set of BBF members performing a variety of hits from the '50s through the '90s. The JayR Brink Band will close the evening.

Bandmates ... Continued on Page 3



Craig Lensing, Foundation President at left, and Barb Shull, Vice-President at right, welcome JayR Brink, middle left, and his band to join Bill Withers and the BBF Band this spring!

Family Wellness Fair

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

The "Spring into Family Wellness Fair" will return on Wednesday, May 14, from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.! Again this year, visitors are welcome to enter the fair at any of the following three entrances: VMH Waukon Clinic, Gundersen Waukon Clinic or the main entrance to Veterans Memorial Hospital. All visitors will follow the route through over 40 fair exhibitors and wellness testing stations, traveling through the hospital, VMH Clinic and Gundersen Clinic.

Over 100 door prizes will be given away along with a goodie bag, healthy snacks, taste testing, face painting and the balloon artist will be returning! Enjoy a complete evening of entertainment, demonstrations and education on area resources for the entire family on Wednesday, May 14!



From the Administrator...



Michael Coyle, CEO

This spring and summer will welcome a new era for VMH with the implementation of Epic, our new electronic medical record. This new system will ensure the best possible patient experience for our patients while giving you immediate access to your healthcare provider. With the patient portal, called "MyChart", patients will now have the full healthcare experience at their fingertips. We are excited to go live with Epic on June 14th, 2025. We plan to have resources available to help you and your families enroll and educate with this patient portal.

We are also excited to welcome a few new providers in the next several months. As we expand our Behavioral Health Services, we will add Janet Hunter and Angela Taylor to our Behavioral Team as Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners. They bring expansive experience in behavioral health and therapy.

We have also recruited another Family Nurse Practitioner who will provide care at both our Waukon and Postville primary care clinics. Hannah Kelly, a Waukon graduate, brings extensive experience and strong dedication to ensuring the best possible patient experience. She will also begin in the fall.

Along with our Associate Providers, we have recruited two new Physicians who are extremely excited about joining VMH! Dr. John Swords will be starting in November and another family practice physician, Dr. Akinboboye will be starting his practice in July of 2026. Our goal is to ensure the best possible patient experience and the ability to get immediate care when needed.

As always, I encourage you, our patients, to request services locally. No matter where you receive care, VMH offers a variety of local services to keep you close to home. All you have to do is ask your provider to order your labs, radiology exams, mammograms, endoscopies and other services at VMH. We are here to serve you and your family.

Michael

Heart Attack Survival Story

Deb Kiley of rural Lansing recently survived a heart attack and is now recovering well with the help of our Cardiac Rehab Department.

Deb tells about her experience, in her own words, "I was having chest pain on a Sunday, on and off all day. I'd had them a few different times before but thought it was because I'd been sick with a virus and pneumonia for two weeks. But this particular pain didn't stop, so I had my husband, Steve, take me to the ER at VMH. They immediately ushered me in and soon confirmed I was having a heart attack. They gave me nitro, which stopped the pain, but it kept returning. Bob Giese was the attending ER Provider that night, and he LITERALLY saved my life! The ER was busy, but I could see the real concern on his face. He knew I needed to be transferred, but at that point I did not meet all of the criteria to be accepted as a cardiac transfer. He earnestly worked to get me transferred, and five hours later, when I did meet all of the criteria, he arranged for my transfer. I arrived at La Crosse Gundersen by ambulance around 2 am, and at 7 am I had a full-blown attack due to a 90% plus blocked artery. They immediately wheeled me to the Cath-lab and put 3 stents in the LAD or 'widow-maker' artery. And here I am today with no heart damage!

We are so lucky and blessed to have VMH here in our community! Bob saved my life! The ER staff was the absolute best, as were the EMTs. I also had a great experience at the Gundersen Cardiac Unit following my transfer. But mostly, I want to thank God and the guardian angel He sent me who entrusted me into their care because He was fighting for me. Now I know that He surely has plans for me!

Our local hospital is amazing and we are so blessed! Bob even called me the next week to see how I was doing. Cardiac Rehab is going well and I am so thankful to be able to do rehab so close to home! Everyone in this facility is so caring and compassionate. Support our local hospital because you never know when you will have an unexpected emergency. And it could be life or death."

Deb pictured in the Cardiac Rehab unit with Amy Rolfs, RN, at left, who oversees Deb's Cardiac Rehab program, and Bob Giese, Emergency Provider who cared for Deb the night of her heart attack.



Deb thanking Bob for saving her life.

This year's event will mark the 47th year that many of BBF's original members first played in a band together. Many of the returning musicians are from Waukon including brothers Bill Withers, Jim Withers, John Withers, along with Gary Hesla, Bob Bechtel, Dave Dougherty, Brad Prestemon, Todd Pickett and Joel Anderson. They will be joined by Keel Clemmens and Jamey Lideen, longtime band members over the years.

"All 11 guys from Bandmates, Brothers and Friends (BBF) said 'yes' again this year, so there's a ton of excitement about being back. If you think about the bands these guys were in across the tri-state, and each musician being available for a single night each of the last three years, it's truly special and almost a miracle," states Bill Withers, event coordinator. "We had a blast with The Toe Tappers last year, and we're equally excited to be working with The JayR Brink Band this year. That means a fun night and a variety of music everyone can enjoy, sing with, and dance to...oldies, country, rock, and all from the last few decades."

"This year is even more special, particularly so for my brothers and me, Jim and John, as BBF is also dedicating their

time in memory of our father, who died this past September after a long career as a Waukon family practice physician. We hope folks come out and remember and celebrate him well. He loved this community and doing medicine here. He and mom always supported the BBF band guys, too. They loved all the musicians and remained friends with their families over the years. I hope everyone comes out to celebrate around a great cause!"

The JayR Brink Band will be finishing out the night with their well-known variety of music covering a mix of country, folk and oldies with a folky, alternative country style. They have been playing the Midwest for over a decade with a varying line-up of seasoned members from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa. Alone and with others, JayR has been performing in some form for over 20 years starting at local venues at the age of 14.

"We are very excited to be a part of this show with BBF and look forward to meeting and hearing stories from all their musicians-so much history there!," states JayR. "All four members of the JayR Brink Band are ready for a night of great music for a great cause! I am always excited when we get to play in my hometown and can't wait for the show on May 9th!"

COME ENJOY THE MUSIC!

Bandmates, Brothers & Friends

with Special Guest: **JayR Brink Band**

FRIDAY, MAY 9 • 6-11 PM • ALLAMAKEE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, WAUKON



Pictured on stage at the first event in 2023 includes back row, left to right, Bill Withers Jr., Gary Hesla and John Withers; front row, Todd Pickett, Joel Anderson, Jamey Lideen, Jim Withers, Bob Bechtel, Dave Dougherty, Brad Prestemon and Keel Clemmens with the late Pat Dougherty's original band guitar front and center on the dance floor.



Lead singer, JayR Brink began performing locally at the young age of 14.



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OR BY USING
THIS QR CODE

Bandmates, Brothers & Friends



"It's great to be a part of this 3rd year playing with our old buddies and raising money for a wonderful cause! I can't wait to see everyone again!" **Brad Prestemon**





I still play quite a bit in the Eau Claire area, and this event has become one of the highlights of the year for me. **Todd Pickett**

"I'm very excited to once again be involved with this event. It's always a pleasure to see everyone come out to support the hospital this way, and it's a great way to honor the memory of Dr. Bill Withers. Dr. Bill's commitment to the hospital and the City of Waukon assured the level of care remains at a superb level." **Keel Clemmens**



The Advantages are EPIC!



-  All your health information in one place
-  Share your medical record safely and securely
-  Quickly schedule appointments and find care
-  Connect with a doctor no matter where you are

Our staff has been in the process of converting our entire electronic medical record system to the EPIC system, which will be a great advantage for our patients, their families, and our medical facility. We have had a desire to reach this milestone for many years, but funding and the right partnership to make this happen were always lacking, until now.

To go through this size of a conversion, smaller hospitals like Veterans Memorial Hospital must have a partner to help walk them through this process. The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) routinely sponsors one entity each year to convert to this EPIC system. Over a year ago, they reserved this year for us to undergo the process with their help. This conversion started last summer and we 'go live' June 14, 2025!

"EPIC can change how we care for our patients, how patients can access their health information and puts the patient in the center of everything we do at VMH," states Michael Coyle,

CEO. "MyChart, which is the patient portal for EPIC, allows access to test results, scheduling, secure messaging with caregivers, screening reminders, virtual visits, prescription management, timely payments and so much more.

EPIC truly allows you to take control of your healthcare. From a care provider standpoint, EPIC ensures better communication between caregivers, increased efficiencies, enhanced patient safety, streamlined workflows, as well as improved patient and staff satisfaction. The team at the UIHC has been an outstanding team to work with during

MyChart ... Continued on Page 5



Staff Kick-Off Summer 2024

this transition and have a wealth of knowledge. We will be the 9th hospital to partner with them in their community connect consortium."

EPIC healthcare software company is based in Verona, WI. Hospitals that use its software held the medical records of 78% of the patients in the United States and 3% worldwide in 2022 and is utilized by all of the larger health systems in the Midwest. Now our medical records will be able to 'talk' to the records in the larger systems which will prove highly beneficial for YOU and all involved in your care. For example,

when a patient is cared for by their local family practice provider in the hospital's Waukon or Postville Clinic, and then is referred for specialty care in a larger system, such as Gundersen or Mayo, the record of their local care will easily be seen by their specialist. And the same is also true for anyone returning to us once again for local care. Their records from the larger facility will now be accessible for the first time.



As 'Go-Live' draws closer, watch our VMH website, social media and local newspapers for more details on accessing MyChart!

Lynn Thomson, 40+ Year Medical Record Coding Specialist Shares her Excitement for EPIC



"I am so excited for Veterans Memorial Hospital to be getting the EPIC Medical Record System! It will help balance the workload of all departments and make the exchange of health information so much more secure."

"This will truly help all departments talk and work together so much better. There will no longer be any waiting for patients to receive a copy of their medical record, obtaining their signature to pick up the copy and then the time it would take to send it to other locations. Now it will all be there whenever needed and the patient can choose whatever app they want to have to access it.

I remember the days we would have a consultant

coming in to review medical records and we would have to physically pull all of the charts and take them to the consultant to review before they met with the patient. Now all the charts will be right there, whenever any kind of chart review is needed.

I am very happy for our local community to have this technology available to them. It will improve everything by having all the medical information in one place, especially when a



Lynn Thomson 1979



Lynn Thomson today

patient is seen at another healthcare facility and all of the charts are right there. It will speed up the process and keep patients more safe with all of the medical records being instantly

updated instead of waiting for filing. I am just very excited for everyone.

The go-live date happens to be on my birthday, so very fitting!"

Check Out Our

NEW WEBSITE

veteransmemorialhospital.com



WHEN A STROKE STRIKES

In mid-January, Marvin 'Bud' Strike of Waukon, woke up in the middle of the night with tingling in his left arm. He was holding it up in the air since he thought he must have slept on it wrong. He threw the covers back

to get out of bed but realized he couldn't move his left leg. That's when his wife, Marge, woke up. She helped Bud get to the edge of the bed, but he slid out of bed onto the floor, with his left leg underneath him. They knew then he must be having a stroke and called 911.

"The first one to come was a Waukon policeman on the night shift, and the ambulance was right behind him. Sara Berges was one of the EMTs who responded, and we know her well from our church, so it was great to see her. The cot could not make the turn from our hallway into our bedroom, so they put me on a chair to get me out to the cot. They loaded me into the ambulance and took me right to the ER."

Bud's wife, Marge, quickly changed clothes and drove to the ER. She states, "It couldn't have taken me 10 minutes to get changed and into the car, but when I arrived at the ER, they already had Bud diagnosed and knew what he needed! Dr. Schwartz was there along with the emergency provider and they all took as good of care of me as they did, Bud."

Medication had been given to stop the stroke and the CT scan had shown that there were no blood clots, so Bud did not have to be transferred. "They were testing me mentally and asked who was president," explains Bud. "I told them that Biden is president now, until Monday when Trump is in office." He was then assigned a patient room.

"Bud had woken up at 4:30 am with his numb arm and was diagnosed and admitted to a hospital room by 6 am and they even had breakfast for him," adds Marge. "It was all like clockwork, all done so quickly, efficiently and accurately. Just like that,



Bud and Marge Strike



Bud pictured with his skilled care team. Back row (left to right): Kim Gossling, RN; Laura Keatley, NP, Hospitalist; Brigid Whalen, RN; Aubree Fuhrman, C.N.A.; Tatum Iverson, Social Worker. Front Row: Dannette Hermeier, RN

he was all settled. He was asked many questions, like if he could touch his nose and repeat sentences, and he passed them all. We are so very fortunate the stroke did not affect his speech or mind."

The next few days, Bud received physical and occupational therapy and nursing care, as well as visits by the dietitian discussing food preferences.

"The staff took great care of me, whether we knew them or not," comments Bud. "They handled everything. When I would press the button to get up, they were right there for me. They took great care of us!"

After three days, the social worker, Tatum, gave Bud the option to be transferred to Skilled Care so he could remain in the hospital longer, receiving the regular two-times-per-day therapy he had been getting to help continue his speedy recovery. She also worked with the insurance company to get everything approved.

"We were so happy to be given the option of Skilled Care, although we didn't completely understand it right away," explains Marge. "We knew he had to qualify for it, which he did, so altogether, Bud stayed nearly three weeks in the hospital between acute and then skilled care. He was so happy in Skilled Care to be able to get up and put on his own street clothes every day."

"The therapy staff are so good, just a great bunch of people. I had occupational therapy and physical therapy twice a day the entire time I was on Skilled Care. Steven, the Speech Therapist, even came to see me, and when I passed his swallowing test, he said, 'I'll see ya!' I didn't need his services, but it was great he was right there if I did."

"I was also amazed by the food they delivered to me. I told the staff there was nothing I didn't like, but I just didn't need so much. I hated to

When a Stroke Strikes ... Continued on Page 7



Amy Evanson, Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant, visited Bud in his home many times following his discharge to provide assistance with exercise and learning how to safely perform daily activities.



send anything back as it was all wonderful, but we are not used to eating three big, full meals a day. I just can't complain about anything."

"One day, when our family was all in town, the staff even set up the Meditation Room for us to share a meal as a family," adds Marge. "That was exceptional care!"

When it was nearing time for Bud to be discharged back home, the social worker suggested Home Care for him and Marge to consider.

"I am so happy I said yes to Home Care," adds Bud. "They are such a good crew and each have their own specialty. They really don't even need any special equipment. They help show me how to get around the house safely and do exercises with me. Physical therapy, occupational therapy and the home care nurse all come to visit on different days. I have to stay homebound to receive this care, but it is well worth it and much easier than trying to get out to the hospital for my therapy."

"We encourage others to take advantage of all these things we can do right here, locally. We appreciated the staff for letting us know all the levels of care that were available and we used them all. We are so very fortunate to have this hospital."



A Schellhorn Family Tradition of Service



The Schellhorn family has made serving on the MFL Fire and Ambulance a true family tradition, now with the addition of a third Schellhorn generation serving the community!

Jim Schellhorn recently celebrated his 40th year in EMS, first taking the EMT class in 1985. His son, Jeremy soon followed in his footsteps and now his son, Jacob, recently became an EMT himself! They are all pictured here on the first ambulance call the three of them were on together.

"I was first on the fire department in Oelwein, then when we moved to Monona, I decided to get more serious about it and took the EMT class," states Jim. "I got involved to help the community and I really enjoy it. I have seen a lot of things, but I do really like to help people with both EMS and the fire department."

My father-in-law was a fireman as well as my brother-in-law, and his son is too, plus my son and now my grandson, so it truly has been a family tradition for us. I just renewed my license for another two years, so I will still have time to keep an eye on my grandson, Jacob! He has wanted to be a fireman since he was 4 or 5 years old and he just stayed with it.

I have been a patient in the ambulance myself and I really appreciate the service. We have good people here."

Jim's son, Jeremy, has also served in EMS and the fire department for most of his life, all thanks to those he admired while a child.

"Dad truly got me into this, watching him do it for so long, and I always wanted to follow in his footsteps. Plus there were a couple of other guys, Mark Willems and Todd Balekos, that I always looked up to, who were and still are pillars in the community and I felt that was one thing I wanted to do....to follow them in their volunteer work. With college, I had moved away, but I did get my EMT license while living in Hiawatha, then began to volunteer here when we moved back home."

When Jacob decided he wanted to take the EMT class, we were all on board and helped him with whatever we could do. He actually started in our MFL Jr. Fire Fighter program first, then took the EMT class through NICC while in high school. Now as a senior, he helps out with safety at the school and doing drills. I am so proud of him and my dad!

Being an EMT or a firefighter is truly giving back to your community. A lot of these small towns have given so much to these kids, giving them great opportunities, and sometimes it is time to give back. The town you live in usually gives you a lot, so I ask people, 'What are you going to give?'

We have an amazing and dedicated service! I can't say enough about what Jacob has done as a firefighter. It is such an honor to work with him!"

Jacob recently earned his EMT certification and immediately began volunteering with the service.



The Schellhorns, Jacob, Jim and Jeremy

"As a child, I would beg Dad to take me to the fire station and just hang out there, so being around all that really got me interested. I knew I needed my EMT for fire fighting, so I just got it done through NICC right away, while in high school. I am a senior, planning to go to Fire School at Kirkwood this fall and hope to work on a fire department down there while in school."

I really enjoy running calls with Grandpa, and my dad enjoys working with me, too. I was only 17 years old when I took the class and had two years of fire experience. The class does take a lot of time, but it ran through the winter for the most part. We just need to find the right people who have a good heart and want to help people. It's a great thing to do, even just around here. You don't have to go to the big city....volunteering in your hometown is just great....we are all looking for more help."

"Jim, Jeremy and Jacob are a real pleasure to work with," states Vicki Heilmann, MFL Ambulance Training Officer. "I was there on their very first call together. I met them on scene and was only there for moral support. They are definitely a serious trio. The guys are a great addition to our service. I have been on-call with Jim on Monday nights for a few years, but after Jacob passed his test and was comfortable going on calls, I gave my spot to him until he leaves for school this fall, so he can be on with his Grandpa!"

"The more people we can get into this field the better," concludes Jacob. "It's not all terrible things that we see on our calls. You form bonds with others and I really think that when you can save someone's life, the thank you that you get from that patient or family is worth doing the whole thing!"

For interest in taking the next EMT class, please contact your local ambulance service or call us at Veterans Memorial Hospital.

The Schellhorns also invite anyone interested in their Jr. Fire Fighting program, to contact them at the Monona Fire Station!

Memorials

The following are memorial donations received by the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation from March 2024-February 2025. Memorial donations benefit and support the health care of citizens in this area and are appreciated by both the hospital and the foundation.

IMO = In Memory of
IHO = In Honor of

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Pat Pettingill
Dave & Gail Prestemon
Diane Regan
Dean Schellhammer
Linda Siegrist
Matthew & Ciara Snitker
Chuck & Lois Votsmier
Terry & Laurie Welch
Kevin & Teri Welsh
Frank & Jean Ann Weymiller

IMO Lorna Bjerke

Marlys Leiran

IMO Maress Jo Lenz

Catherine Walker

IMO Dale Tieskoetter

James Moritz
Barbara Tieskoetter

IHO Cherie White

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IMO Lawrence Lotza

Jan Lotza

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Sandra Thompson

IMO Ken West

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Sheila Clair
Charles & Marcella Fritz
Mary Ann Hager
Barb & Dave Hanson
Sigurd & Barb Ness
Pat Pettingill
Sandy Pladsen
Dave & Gail Prestemon
Marvin & Marjorie Strike
Chuck & Lois Votsmier
Arlen & Karlene Wonderlich

IMO William "Bill" Bresnahan

Mary Ann Hager
Chuck & Lois Votsmier

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Pamela Setera

IMO Evelyn Specht

Chuck & Lois Votsmier

IMO James "Jim" Driscoll

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Memorials

The following are memorial donations received by the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation from March 2024-February 2025. Memorial donations benefit and support the health care of citizens in this area and are appreciated by both the hospital and the foundation.

IMO = In Memory of
IHO = In Honor of

Ron & Kim Winters
Arlen & Karlene Wonderlich

IMO Leona Gesing

Dan & Traci Byrnes
Dave & Gail Prestemon
Fred & Geralyn Smith
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IMO Dr. Bill Withers

Joel & Mary Anderson
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Jacqueline Carr-Peeler
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Michael & Martha Yonamine

IMO Sandra Allen

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Pat Pettingill

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Pat Pettingill
Linda Siegrist
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IMO Marvin Petersen

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IMO Lawrence Powell

Scott & Kim Bollman
Beverly Bacon

IMO Bill Smith

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Birthing Services Testimonial

"I am a nurse at VMH and in October 2024, I had my baby here with Dr. Schwartz. When my husband and I found out I was pregnant, there was no question where we wanted to go to deliver our baby and who we wanted to be our provider and care team. We knew we would be very well cared for. I knew I wanted to try the birthing tub after seeing other moms being so calm and relaxed through their labor. From starting out with prenatal care in the clinic to delivering our baby girl, Ella, and through our postpartum journey, everyone has been amazing to work with.

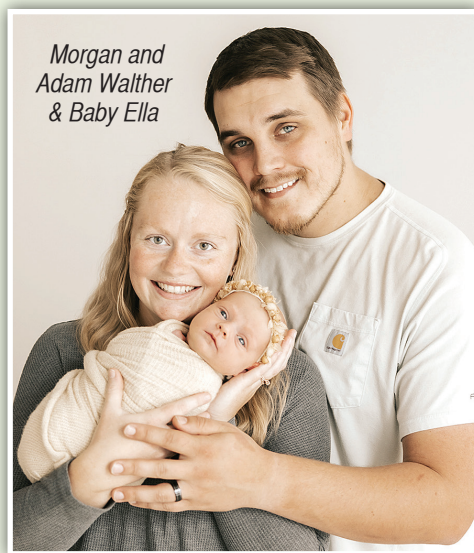
After working in our obstetrics department since I started as a nurse, I was excited to have my own experience. I got to deliver in the birthing tub, in a peaceful environment, with my husband at my side and my sister there for support and to take pictures of those first precious moments. I often get asked if I thought it was weird to have a baby where I work and with my coworkers present, but they make it feel like family. Our nurses were fantastic, and even though they were very busy with other

moms and babies, they took the time to make sure our every need and want was met. The food was good; this is coming from me, a very picky eater! The housekeepers were hard at work and so friendly and happy to see our sweet baby girl.

My sister, Heather, was with us during the delivery. She states, 'I got the chance to watch Dr. Schwartz provide care to her and her baby. Truthfully, I have never witnessed someone who is so peaceful and calming while also remaining alert and attentive to the situation at hand. Though Morgan's labor went through the night, Dr. Schwartz didn't once seem bothered that he had to wake up to check in with her. He came into the dark room, checked in with Morgan on her progress, and just spent time with us to see how she was handling labor. He absolutely made it seem like

Morgan and her baby were his priorities, even over his own sleep. When Ella was born, I think Dr. Schwartz had a smile as big as her parent's. Throughout the whole experience, Dr. Schwartz took the time to listen, watch, interact, and to pause in the joy of new life. From being a mom who has had Dr. Schwartz help deliver my own babies to being a support person watching him deliver my sister's baby, I cannot recommend him enough.'

While pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum can be difficult, every person we worked with was there to help us and make it the best experience possible. We are so incredibly lucky to have all of this care available to us so close to home." **Morgan Walther, Waukon**



*Morgan and
Adam Walther
& Baby Ella*



*Dr. Schwartz patiently waiting as the
labor progressed.*

BIRTHING SERVICES TEAM

at
*Veterans
Memorial
Hospital*



**David Schwartz,
MD**



**Halie Ruff,
NP**



**Katy Maker, Nurse
Midwife & Family NP**

CALL VMH
Waukon
Medical Clinic
(563) 568-5530
or Postville
Medical Clinic
(563) 864-7221



Birthing Services Testimonial



Eliana's family (from left to right) includes her brother Emiliano, sister Emily, mother Laura, aunt Dulce, cousin Matti, great aunt Rosa holding Eliana, and father Carlos

"I delivered two babies at VMH; Emily who is 9 years old and Eliana is 7 months. The first time when I was pregnant, my provider was Dr. Nesseim. I loved him because he had so much empathy and was wonderful. It was an amazing experience when I delivered here.

My last baby, Eliana, was a surprise at age 40! I needed to choose a new provider and chose Katy since she's at the VMH Clinic in Postville every Friday. I felt so comfortable with Katy because she truly understood me as a woman. She was incredibly patient and encouraged me to take good care of myself and my baby. I had a normal pregnancy, but one night I had to go to the ER due to bleeding. I was able to go home, but I returned a few days later with contractions. They called Katy in and took me upstairs to Maternity Services. Because the baby was early, we had a doctor from La Crosse on video with us in case we needed any help. I had one nurse with me holding me, hugging me, telling me I could do this! She was really, really wonderful! I still want to thank her because I didn't think I could do it. I remember Jessica, she was wonderful too. All of them were so patient with me. Skip the Anesthetist was even outside the room that evening all prepared in case they needed to do an emergency c-section.

Eliana was only four pounds and needed to be transferred immediately to La Crosse, but I had to stay behind for my own care. Katy returned the next day to reassure me that the baby was a little spark, doing her best. My care was wonderful—I felt at home, like family, since mine wasn't here and my husband was with Eliana in La Crosse. I worried about her, but the nurses assured me she was in good hands and reminded me to let them take good care of me, too! As a Latino, I feel great knowing they treat me just like anyone else. They are wonderful and really care about their patients!

I shared my experience with other families in Postville because everything there is excellent. When I attended my clinic appointments, the staff were incredibly helpful with all of my paperwork and insurance. I enjoy bringing Eliana for her appointments with Katy. She knows how to care for you, and her nurse, Selina, is also wonderful. Selina is very patient with my husband when he takes Eliana to her appointments while I am working. She is excellent with him.

One day at my appointment in Postville with Katy, I asked her how many pregnant women she would see today and she said maybe 15! She is so patient with all of her clients who don't know how to speak English. She is amazing!" **Laura Castillo, Postville**

Community Health Needs ASSESSMENT SURVEY



Every three years, we are required to survey the communities we serve by gathering a list of the health needs our communities feel are most important or unmet that will help guide and direct health planning activities. We are now conducting that survey once again and seeking YOUR input!

The survey can be accessed through the QR code or on the home page of the Veterans Memorial Hospital website at www.veteransmemorialhospital.com.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SURVEY BY MAY 15.



Thank you so much for helping us serve you better!

Riding a Health Roller Coaster

Danny Mathis of Waukon has been on a roller coaster ride, in and out of the hospital with complications due to a bad gallbladder, utilizing the Veterans Memorial Hospital Clinic, ER, Radiology, Skilled Care, Pharmacy, Rehabilitation and Wound Care Services since last November. His devoted wife, Kathy, who is always right by his side, tells their story and their appreciation for local health care.

"On November 6, Danny went into the Waukon Clinic to see his provider, Sue McMillan, for his nosebleeds. She knew right away that being on his blood thinner, Warfarin, for many years, changes how it works, against your body and needs to be adjusted, so she downsized his dosage and the nosebleeds quit. She was spot on! But Danny didn't tell her that day he just wasn't feeling quite right."

"On November 13, he said to me, 'I feel terrible. My body hurts from left to right, all across my front.' We went to the ER and the provider, Becky Krambeer was very thorough, asking him many questions. The X-ray tech took him down for a CT scan and it wasn't even 10 minutes later when Becky came back and said, 'This guy is going to La Crosse right now by ambulance...his gallbladder is perforated. We are getting a team together to make the transfer.'"

"Danny was taken to Gundersen Health in La Crosse and we were so thankful. The surgeon and surgery team met him right in the ER and said, 'After looking at your CT scan, we can see you have a serious problem and you must have your gallbladder out asap!' But with Danny being on the Warfarin, they had to try to thicken his blood first with an IV of Vitamin K. That took some time, and two days later, Danny was finally able to have that much-needed surgery."

"Danny's surgery lasted four-five hours, and when the surgeon came out, he told us his gallbladder was terrible and he had gotten all of it that he could. He did have to leave some waste in the body cavity because it was too close to the liver and he did not want to touch the liver. He said Danny has a drainage tube in place and that he was stable, but the surgery was rough."

"It was a full day before Danny was alert. Four hours later, we were discharged and transferred to Veterans Memorial Hospital for Skilled Care/Swing Bed. We were told at Gundersen that we had to have Danny to Waukon by shift change that evening. We were a bit nervous as we were a little late, but that was no issue at all at Veterans Memorial Hospital. They met us at the door and got Danny all settled."

"On Saturday, Brad Krambeer was in to see him for therapy. He came in, greeted Danny, and said, 'We are going to get you going!' Brad came in on both Saturday



Danny with his wife Kathy, seated at left, surrounded by many of his team who cared for him during his two skilled care stays, including, left to right, Paige Gavin, Housekeeper; Penny Wheeler, C.N.A.; Brad Krambeer, Athletic Trainer; Amy Ghelf, PT Assistant; and Erica Mannette, Lab Tech.

and Sunday that first weekend, which was very helpful and considerate."

"Monday morning we had a staff meeting with the dietitian, social worker, RN on duty, Rehab, Dr. Schwartz, and the pharmacist, who knew all about Danny's blood thinner issues. They each said just a few sentences that concerned their area of care, directing it all right to Danny so we understood everything completely. Danny received daily physical and occupational therapy. His sessions focused on strength and overall wellness. Then, nurses assisted him walking the halls and he made it a little further each time. I was so thankful the nurses took great care of his drain tube so I didn't have to, because I don't do well with that!"

"The following Friday, Danny had a recheck in La Crosse. They removed the drain after those 10 days and we came back here to Swing Bed. He was in very good spirits and was home by the end of November and he did great for the next five weeks."

"Then, in the first part of January, Danny said he just didn't feel the best. Every day he was eating less and less and nothing tasted good to him. Then on February 6, he fell at home after showering. We decided the walk-in clinic that evening was the best option. The provider Alex Berns, asked us what was wrong and when we told him, they took him immediately for a CT scan. Just 15 minutes later, Alex returned with the results and said, 'I am going to send you over to my friend John Kelly in ER at the hospital.' John explained that Danny had an abscess on his liver that was as big as a zucchini. He explained to Danny this was a result of his gallbladder surgery and he would be sending

Health Roller Coaster ... Continued on Page 13

*"ALL the support from VMH staff has been exceptional in their care, encouragement and solutions for me regaining my strength. I appreciate the therapy team still working with me towards recovery." **Danny Mathis***

him back to La Crosse."

"Danny spent the next six days again at Gundersen getting Vitamin K to reverse his blood thinner, then putting in another drain tube. We chose no surgery this time, but rather to wait it out with the drain tube and IVs. Then we returned to Waukon again for Skilled Care/Swing Bed."



Danny at Outpatient Physical Therapy.

"We came back down here to VMH and had the best care! Again, they explained everything to us. Everyone remembered him! It was a great atmosphere for both of us. He was back in Waukon and comfortable. We knew it would just take time and patience."

"It has definitely been a long haul, but we are so thankful to everyone. Skilled Care was just what he needed, both times. Everyone was so helpful and attentive for



Danny also utilized the Wound Care program offered by Amy Robinson, PT, following his gall bladder surgery to aid in the healing from his incisions.

him. We are blessed to have all that we have here. Now we are running back and forth to PT and OT as an outpatient at the hospital, and I don't mind that one bit. We are just thankful we don't have to go any further than VMH!"

"We have told many about the Skilled Care/Swing Bed option. I actually suggested it to our La Crosse doctors both times. I don't know if they would have mentioned it to us, but they all thought it was a good idea. Everyone talked to us on our level. We are not medical professionals, but no one ever talked over our heads."

"We also learned that Danny can receive his Ellegard shot for cancer right here, without having to drive to La Crosse. We didn't know this was an option—but live and learn. We should have asked; we just hadn't realized all the services available locally. Now we know to always ask!"

2024 Press Ganey Human Experience Guardian of Excellence Award®

We were honored to receive a 2024 Human Experience (HX) Guardian of Excellence Award® from Press Ganey, the global leader in healthcare experience solutions and services. This award is part of Press Ganey's annual ranking of the top hospitals and health systems in the country, according to performance in patient experience in emergency care.

As a winner of the Press Ganey HX Guardian of Excellence Award®, we were in the top 5% of healthcare providers in delivering emergency care in the last year.

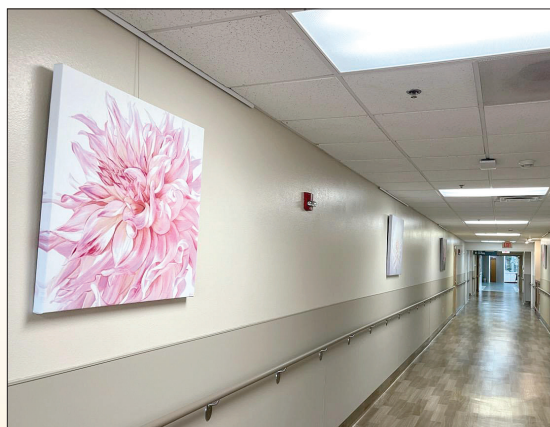
WE NEED YOUR INPUT! Please take a few minutes to complete the surveys you receive after your appointments and procedures at VMH. Your input is essential in helping us improve our services to better meet your needs. Your feedback also plays a crucial role in recognizing excellence and earning awards like this. Thank you for your time and support!

**2024
HX Guardian
of Excellence
Award®**

PressGaney

**Human Experience
Award winner**





*Val Miller of
Steel Cow*

Our hallways are now boasting the outstanding artwork of Val Miller of Steel Cow, in Waukon! Val has loaned many of her new floral prints for display in our patient areas and they have greatly brightened our environment.

"Lately I've been having so much fun growing flowers and painting them," states Val, who is a local artist, born and raised in Waukon, and owner of Steel Cow with her husband, Josh. "The only downside to garden-grown flowers is that they never last long enough. With these pieces of flower art, we can relive our most wonderful garden memories and be surrounded by garden-grown flowers year-round."

You are welcome to stop in and enjoy these gorgeous prints or visit her website at www.steelcowlavenderfarm.com for even more beautiful options.



32nd Annual

FOUNDATION GOLF TOURNAMENT MONDAY, JUNE 16

The Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation's Annual Three Person Best-Shot Golf Tournament is set for Monday, June 16, at the Waukon Golf and Country Club.

Teams of three will begin the day with a shotgun start at 9:30 a.m. and play 18 holes of golf. Breakfast rolls, lunch and dinner and prizes for everyone will all be provided for the donation of \$75.

All those interested are asked to pre-register their team by calling the Waukon Golf and Country Club at 568-9939. For more information about the golf tournament, please call Veterans Memorial Hospital at (563) 568-3411.

SAFETY DAY CAMP

Planned for
**Wednesday,
June 4**



Veterans Memorial Hospital is excited to host the Safety Day Camp for children ages 6 to 14 on Wednesday, June 4, at the Allamakee Fairgrounds from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm. This camp, open to all children ages

6-14 in the area, is a hands-on safety experience offered every other year. It is designed to teach important life-saving skills.

Each year, countless children are injured or killed due to accidents. This Safety Day Camp teaches children how to prevent injuries and reduce the risk of accidents. Children will participate in interactive activities that reinforce the importance of taking responsibility for their own safety, respecting parents' safety rules and sharing safety tips with their family and friends.

The \$15 registration fee includes lunch, snacks, a take-home goodie bag, a first aid kit, and a Safety Day Camp T-shirt.

Parents can register their children to participate in the camp by picking up a registration form at the main entrance of Veterans Memorial Hospital or from the Allamakee County Extension Office. Or you may register for the camp online at www.veteransmemorialhospital.com. Please note, only the first 150 applications will be accepted.

Hospital History - *Becky Welper*

Becky Welper worked her entire career as a nurse at Veterans Memorial Hospital. As a new graduate in 1979, she was interviewed by Prea Anderson, the Director of Nursing at that time, who offered her a job on the spot, and she stayed for the next 42 years, retiring in 2021.

Becky was no stranger to the hospital, having grown up with her dad, Robert "Bob" Fritz, working with Curt Schoenthal in the Maintenance Department and driving the ambulance.

When Becky was in high school, she took advantage of the school's health careers group, which introduced her to many areas of health care. She continued on in the program to become a Candy Striper, helping at the hospital evenings and taking patient trays into the rooms. It wasn't a lot of hours, but it was great experience, making her decision that she wanted to become a nurse. She then continued her high school career as a nurse's aide at the Waukon Good Samaritan Center and achieved her nurse's degree in Calmar in 1979.

"Boards were not just one general test like they are now. They were broken down into med-surge and OB and Peds, divided into two categories, so we had to test over two different days. Getting results took MUCH longer, so we were granted a temporary license that we could be a nurse under until our results were received.

I remember being nervous, knowing that I had to work on the patient floor, in Emergency, Obstetrics, plus the Intensive Care and Critical Care units we had at the time. We worked 8-hour shifts, 40 hours over five days a week, plus every other weekend, so you had one day off a week when it was your weekend to work. The 12-hour shifts now are long, but much better to get more days off.

We wore white and even our nursing hats for about a year after I started, but they were always in the way, hitting the traction that went across the beds. We also were expected to stand whenever the doctors came to round on their patients. In the '90s, we started to wear colors instead of just plain white.

One night as I began my shift, there was a mom in OB getting ready to deliver. Mary Riley's instinct was to stay and watch over me because she wanted to make sure everything went ok. She was always very protective of the new nurses and great to help us out.

Unfortunately, this was the time that LPNs and Nurse's Aides were being phased out and replaced by RNs, even though they knew as much or more than many of us RNs. You could trust them. Chris Nelson was so much fun. . . . Helen Plein and Bonnie Sanderman really knew their stuff, plus so many other LPNs didn't get the credit for their knowledge. I was sorry to see them go. Fortunately, we were able to keep Cathy Larson and Beth Baxter, and now the Nursing Aides have made a comeback and are a huge help on the floor.

When you worked ER, many times the patients who came in had their bags packed. . . they were going to stay no matter what the doctor said! Back then insurance was not as particular. When observation care started, insurance really started looking at things. That might be the reason Medicare got so picky!

Skilled Care started in the late '80s when Ingrid Dehli Hogan was still here. She was our Discharge Planner and did a great job. I picked up that role after she sadly passed. That's also when Outpatient Services began, giving IV antibiotics and other medications on an outpatient basis.

When same-day surgeries started, we didn't have room in surgery for the patients to recover back there, so we used rooms 207 and 209 for their short recovery. But that took away from the rooms we had on the patient floor and made so much more work for the housekeepers. It was great after we built the



*Becky's Dad, Bob Fritz,
at right in VMH Dining Room.*

new surgery suite in 2000 with a same-day surgery recovery area.

I enjoyed being the discharge planner, working with the patients to qualify for the level of care they needed and deciding what they needed to go home to keep them safe. It was hard for families sometimes to let them go back home, but sometimes they just had to try it.

I was also the first one to become chemotherapy trained, administering local chemo treatments. We took an empty room on the third floor for this, and I was able to decorate it and sit with those patients and their family members. We had to stop when we lost our supervising oncologist from Gundersen, but I'm glad it sounds like that service will be coming back to the hospital soon!

I loved all these special roles, but my mom was upset that I wasn't working the floor anymore. She didn't realize these roles were still part of nursing.

Nursing is such a diverse occupation and one I still highly recommend. My son Aaron actually went back to school for nursing after working in IT and began his career the same year I retired!

The larger hospitals always knew our nurses were a 'rare commodity' because they were experienced in all different areas of nursing. They were not just focused on one area like they usually are when working in the larger hospitals. They always wanted to steal them away from us and that problem has not gone away.

Transferring to the EPIC medical record system will be a very good thing. With my health problems, it will be great the doctors can look at my chart from La Crosse and see just what I had done, even the entire summary of what they said. With EPIC, patients get their results right away. It will be a good thing. You will be able to see your medical history and can be your own advocate with the help of EPIC. It's so hard to remember everything the doctor tells you at your appointments, especially if you aren't feeling well. Now with EPIC, you can come home and look it up whenever you want.

I do feel for all the staff having to learn another system. I can remember in 2014 when all hospitals were given a deadline by the government to transfer to an electronic medical record from the paper charts. I was not against the change, and of course, we couldn't afford EPIC at that time, so we went with what we could afford. This will be something new to learn, but in the long run, it will be a good thing.

The care given in a small hospital is so superior to anywhere else. Veterans Memorial Hospital is a small hospital and a family. It was the best place to work. I was never going to drive an hour away to go to work. We worked well together and we cared well for the patients because they were like our family. I always felt it was good to help those in our community. . . it never made it harder. I always hoped our patients felt like family.

My advice to everyone is don't make a bucket list for later. . . do the things you can afford to do when you can afford to do them. Don't wait. No one knows what life will bring you. Do those things now as you can, before you can't."



Becky with a new chemotherapy hood.



*Becky receiving top 100
Nurse Award in 2012.*

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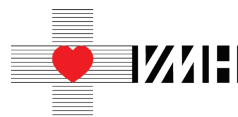
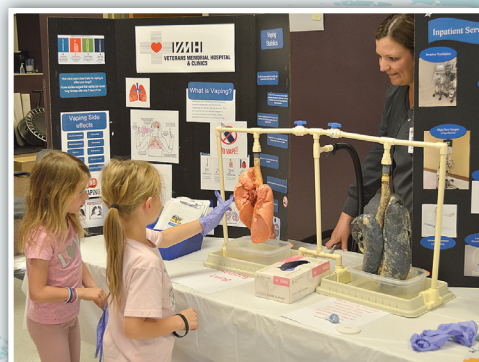
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