



Spring  
2026



Photo by BB Photography

## VETERANS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL & CLINICS

# FOUNTAINS OF HEALTH

CELEBRATING

# 75 YEARS of Care

Thanks to Legendary Physicians  
of the Past and Present



Dr. B. J. Dillon

For 75 years, Veterans Memorial Hospital has been the cornerstone of care in Allamakee County and the surrounding area. This opportunity began thanks to our founding fathers, including Dr. B.J. Dillon, and has continued for the last 30 years thanks to Dr. Dave Schwartz. They are two very similar legends.

Dr. Dillon was instrumental in the founding of the hospital in 1950. He was known as the oldest practicing physician, along with Dr. Clark W. Rominger, and often stated he could have written a book several inches thick about the years he cared for the people of the area. In a past newspaper article, Dr. Dillon was quoted as saying "When I get through with a day's work and sit down to relax and think of all the good things I have done, I feel well repaid for all my efforts." ... Continued on Page 2



Dr. Dave Schwartz

## Family Wellness Fair

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

The "Spring into Family Wellness Fair" will return on Wednesday, May 6, from 3:30 to 6:00 pm. This year, a Community Meal will be served to celebrate the 75th Year of Veterans Memorial Hospital and the 5th year of VMH Clinics!

Again this year, visitors are welcome to enter the fair at any of the following three entrances: VMH Waukon Clinic, Emplify Gundersen Waukon Clinic or the main entrance to Veterans Memorial Hospital. All visitors will follow the route through the over 40 fair exhibitors and wellness testing stations, traveling through the hospital, VMH Clinic and Emplify Gundersen Clinic and enjoy the community meal in the Dining Room.

Over 100 door prizes will be given away! Enjoy a complete evening of entertainment, games, demonstrations and education on area resources for the entire family on Wednesday, May 6!



# From the Administrator...



**Michael Coyle, CEO**

Spring is finally here in Northeast Iowa! With longer days, warmer temperatures, and everything starting to turn green again, it's a wonderful time to enjoy our communities. All of us at Veterans Memorial Hospital are excited to welcome the season right along with you.

As we move into spring, we're also celebrating an exciting milestone this June—one year since we introduced our Epic electronic medical record system. Through MyChart, our patient portal, you can easily check test results, pay bills, and message your provider. If you haven't signed up yet, we'd be glad to help you—just stop in or ask any of our staff.

There's also great progress happening in Postville on our new Postville Rural Health Clinic. Construction is underway and expected to wrap up in September. The new space will offer larger exam rooms, a procedure room, behavioral health offices, and a more comfortable, welcoming reception area. We're excited to create a space that better serves our patients and families in the Postville community.

Spring also means it's time for our annual VMH Health Fair—one of our favorite events of the year. It's a great chance to visit with healthcare providers, learn about services available in our area, and connect with others in the community. This year is especially meaningful as we celebrate 75 years of Veterans Memorial Hospital and 5 years of our medical clinics.

We'd also love for you to stop in and meet our newest providers. We've added several primary care and behavioral health providers in both Waukon and Postville, along with expanded hours to better fit your schedule.

On behalf of everyone at Veterans Memorial Hospital, thank you for trusting us with your care and for being such an important part of our community. I wish you and your family a beautiful spring and look forward to seeing you soon.

*Michael*

... Continued from Page 1

"The discovery of penicillin is the greatest medical advancement, with insulin and sulfa drugs not far behind," he commended. Dr. Dillon also noted that since he had started in his practice, the longevity of life had been increased by 14 years due to the drugs and surgery for goiter, prostate and gallbladder disorders. He also highly praised the advancements made in the discovery and treatment of tuberculosis.

Dr. Dillon's grandson, Thomas Edward Bertram Sullivan of St. Louis, named after his grandfather, is still a supporter of the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation. He shares some of his memories:

"Grandpa lived in Waterville for a long time, but moved to Waukon so his daughter could attend high school. Mother always said when Grandpa would go out into that ag community to deliver babies, they may not see him again for a few days, but he always had his bulldog with him."

"I can remember a situation that happened at the ice rink at the fairgrounds when I was a kid. My four-year-old brother, Roger, and I were skating with Judy Rominger, Dr. Rominger's daughter. We lived just four doors away from each other. We raced home because Roger had felt moisture in his foot. Instead of showing Grandpa his injury, he did his own first aid, then looked at it again four days later when it was very red. Then he finally went to see Grandpa, who was upset he didn't come see him right away, and now had an infection. Back in those days, Grandpa had a big jar of something that we called 'magic salve' that he used on many different things. He treated the wound with it and in two days, it was better!"

"Grandpa had his medical practice in the 'Queen Ann House' that still stands on the corner of W. Main and 3rd Street SW in Waukon. He got word his brother's wife was having a problem, so he went down to his house and soon knew she had appendicitis. He took her to the hospital right away and performed the surgery.... he could do anything!"

Over 32 doctors came and went from Allamakee County during Dr. Dillon's practice. He was one of the best-known and best-loved men in the county and had the confidence of all who knew him, much like Dr. Dave Schwartz, who for the past 30 years has been a dedicated legend himself.



*Dr. Dave Schwartz*

"When Joan and I came to Waukon 30 years ago, I was fresh out of my residency in La Crosse. We were looking for a small community where I could have a full spectrum practice with OB and she could find a teaching position. Waukon was a perfect fit. We stay because it is home. Northeast Iowa has everything we could ask for geographically, with four seasons of beauty. The community, however, is what has made it home.

"I remember in college seeing the new technology called ultrasound... It looked like trying to read a billboard in a blizzard. Now the images can show a small defect in an unborn baby's heart the size of an acorn. CT scans only existed in large hospitals like Iowa City. Now they are everywhere, including specialty clinics with use being the norm rather than the exception. When I was in medical school, the issues of the days were quantity of life vs quality of life with Terri Schiavo being the topic of many discussions. Now we appreciate that there are things much worse than death, and God has a place for us all!"

"As a healthcare provider, I am blessed with the opportunity to be a part of so many people's lives. It is humbling to realize that families and individuals share their best and worst moments and memories with me. The trust that is shared is mutual."

**For 75 years, Veterans Memorial Hospital has been guided by physicians who don't just treat patients—they care for neighbors, families, and friends. Thank you, Dr. Dillon and Dr. Schwartz, for reminding us that while medicine evolves, compassion remains timeless.**

# McCormick's Care Through the Years

Joan and Kent McCormick of Waterville have been faithful patients of Veterans Memorial Hospital and know how to ask if their care can be provided here, close to home!

Kent can recall when he was a child going to see Dr. Jeffries in his clinic in downtown Waukon, above Klenske Drug Store, which is now the Gemini Salon. Following that, he saw Dr. Withers in the old Waukon St. Francis Clinic, located next to the hospital's ER.

After moving to the area to marry her husband, Kent of 50 years, Joan and Kent chose Veterans Memorial Hospital as the place to bring their first child, Keith, into the world, and Mike two years later. Due to a few complications, their third son, Jake, was born in La Crosse.

In 2012, Joan had both of her knees replaced at the same time in Rochester. Kent brought her to VMH for swing-bed skilled care as she recovered and had lots of therapy, working hard and giving it her all with great results.

Since 2017, Joan has been an inspiration to many in her mighty and determined fight against cancer. She was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, which was found just before having a hip replacement.

"I was anemic prior to the surgery and they did many tests to find out where the bleeding was coming from," explains Joan. "My last test was a bone marrow test and that's where they found it. I was told it was a type of blood cancer, not curable, but treatable and that is what we have done!"

Joan had a successful Stem Cell Transplant in 2019 in Rochester, which put the cancer in remission for five years. In November 2023, Joan underwent CarT-Cell Therapy, which again put the cancer in remission but left Joan with some tough side effects.

"My cancer is in remission, but I have been suffering from facial palsy and intense bone pain since the procedure, mainly on my right side," adds Joan.

On January 9, Joan became very ill and Kent took her back to Rochester. The surgeon suspected her colon was dying and would need surgery immediately to remove it. The second option was to do nothing and take four or five days to get her life in order and say her goodbyes.

"We made the decision to have the surgery. After surgery, the surgeon returned to my room and stated we had made the right choice. I went into surgery at 10 pm and was out by 12:30 am with the good news. They did not need to remove any of my colon since it was still alive," explains Joan. "They left the wound open for two days to watch it before returning to surgery to close me up again."

Joan remained in the Intensive Care Unit in Rochester for two more weeks until

she was transferred to the Palliative Care floor. When the surgeons were ready to release her from their care, they asked if there was somewhere closer to home she would like to go to have her therapy, and both Joan and Kent asked if she could come back to Waukon.

"Joan had a very long incision from this surgery and a lot of muscle to rebuild, so we knew she would need a lot of therapy to get her strength back. We remembered the excellent skilled care Joan had received in Waukon after her knee replacements, so I called down here to the Social Worker, Tatum Iverson, who said they had room for her," remembers Kent. "The social worker in Rochester, Jack, called to make the arrangements and we were all set up and ready within a half hour. It was great!"

Joan arrived at VMH on February 4 to begin her swing-bed skilled care stay.

"Joan received great care in Rochester, but not the personal care that you receive in Waukon," adds Kent. "Most of the staff know Joan and are very attentive to her needs. The care is just fantastic!"

Joan adds, "The therapy staff is so good here and I can get therapy twice a day, both physical and occupational. Occupational therapy has helped work on my hand strength and physical therapy with my muscles. They both work together so well. I continue to see them for an hour each session."

Melissa Clarke has been Joan's main Occupational Therapist after returning to skilled care in Waukon. She remembers Joan's determination when she first met her in 2012 after her double knee replacement.

"Joan was the first patient I had ever seen with a double knee replacement and she amazed me with her strength, determination and will to improve," remembers Melissa. "Working with her through this rehab stay, 14 years later, I can still see that determined, strong woman. It is so fun to work with someone willing to put in the work every day to get better. Most patients want to have a break from therapy on the weekend, but Joan was eager to keep improving, so I always left her exercise equipment and activities that she could work on over the weekend in her room. We were able to push her a little further each day so she was able to increase her mobility, safety, and function to return home!"

Two days after returning to Waukon for skilled care, Kent had surgery on his arm for nerve pain caused by pinched nerves in his elbow. He had the surgery at Emplify Health by Gundersen in La Crosse.

"They took me into surgery and removed the scar tissue around pinched nerves in my elbow," explains Kent. "I again asked if I could get the therapy I needed in Waukon instead of driving to La Crosse and they said yes.

There were no issues at all in coming here and I feel very fortunate that I could. Tami Gebel has been working with me and making great progress. I couldn't even move two of my fingers and that has returned nicely."

Joan returned home on March 10 from her nearly five-week skilled care stay at VMH and will return three days a week for outpatient therapy as long as needed.

"I can't thank the staff enough," concludes Joan. "When I arrived on February 4, I couldn't even walk to the doorway of my room and before I went home, I could walk all the way down the hall to therapy and back with the assistance of a walker. Brad and Melissa especially were fantastic in helping me get moving again! I am so thankful."



*Joan McCormick pictured with Melissa Clarke, Occupational Therapist, in her hospital room during her swing-bed skilled care stay.*



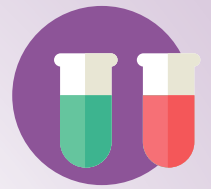
*Kent McCormick pictured with his Occupational Therapist, Tami Gebel, during outpatient therapy following his surgery for pinched nerves in his elbow.*



*Joan at one of her first outpatient physical therapy appointments after going back home. She is pictured with Laurel Hagensick, Physical Therapist, and Brad Krambeer, Athletic Trainer.*



# Persistence in Pathology & Emergency Care



Our Lab Techs and lab analyzers recently proved very useful in detecting a rare infection for Craig Lensing of Waukon. Craig was having some serious knee pain that he chalked up as arthritis, but after resting the knee, the pain continued to get worse and worse until it was nearly unbearable.

“I had to give in and come to the ER that Friday evening because I was in so much pain and it was quickly worsening,” explains Craig. “Bob Giese was the ER provider and he ordered an X-ray of my knee. He agreed that I did have some arthritis in the knee, but was concerned about the fluid on my knee. Bob gave me a couple of different options...to take pain meds and see what happens or he could go ahead and drain it. We decided on draining the knee, so Bob did that, pulling 45 cc’s of fluid off my knee. The fluid was not clear, but cloudy, which was puzzling to him. He sent it to the lab at VMH and ordered tests run on it. They did quickly find infection in the fluid, but didn’t know what it was.”

Craig’s wife Barb, who was in the ER with Craig, remembers, “They continued the lab testing while Bob consulted back and forth with an orthopedic physician at Mayo in La Crosse as well as with Dr. Schwartz. They agreed Craig needed to be transferred to Mayo in La Crosse. They quickly had him scheduled for surgery at 9:30 am the next morning, on Saturday. They did the laparoscopic surgery to really clean out the knee and some of the arthritis, and again drained more fluid off of his knee to be used for testing.”

At this point, it had been identified by both the VMH Lab and Mayo that Craig had an infection in his knee, but the problem remained that the infection could not be identified, so to know how to treat his infection.

“Cultures of the fluid were taken both here and Mayo. These usually

take just 48-72 hours to identify what it is. The Mayo Infectious Disease department also got involved and received the same results as VMH, but they could not get anything to grow either, so they just didn’t know what they were dealing with,” continues Craig. “I was released from the Mayo hospital the following Tuesday with an antibiotic that they felt should cover most all infections since this had not yet been identified.”

“Bob called me from VMH ER after I returned home, knowing that the infection had still not been identified. He explained they still had some of the culture here in our lab and that they would continue to test it in new ways to get an answer. So they did that, and the following Monday he called me, explaining the culture had finally grown and we now knew what the infection was...Streptococcus Mitis.”

Caty Bruening, Lab Manager, further explains the testing process: “We did an initial/preliminary stain of the fluid and after a thorough scan of the slide, found an organism under the microscope. After putting the fluid on the culture plates and incubating, nothing grew for a few days. Bob questioned this and wanted us to dig



*Craig with Bob Giese, ER Provider at Veterans Memorial Hospital, the day Craig came into the ER with a rare infection in his knee. Bob, along with the Laboratory Technicians, relentlessly kept testing the fluid until the organism was identified.*

deeper, so we put the fluid in culture bottles usually reserved for blood and then into our Bactec instrument. The instrument detected growth, and after transferring the fluid from the bottles back onto plates, an organism grew that we were able to identify with help from Emplify.”

“This organism is fastidious, meaning it is harder than most organisms to get to grow outside of the body,” continues Caty. “I think that it was present in such small amounts in his joint that that made it even harder to grow.”

“The Laboratory here at VMH went over and above to figure out just what we were dealing with,” states Barb. “Thank God Bob kept testing it, staying on top of it and finally getting it identified.”

Craig concludes, “They said this happens in 20% of patients with infections, that they can’t figure out what the bacteria or infection is, but we were so thankful for Bob and the lab staying on top of this. How many others would do that?”



*Craig pictured in the laboratory with two of the laboratory technicians, Megan Rathbun, at left, and Michelle Benda, at right. Megan found the rare organism causing Craig’s infection initially under the microscope and Michelle led the search for growth of the organism.*



# EXAMINING BLOOD CELLS IN A WHOLE NEW WAY

Our Laboratory has added a new and exciting piece of technology to help our team analyze patient blood samples more quickly and accurately. The system, called CellaVision, is a digital imaging tool that allows our laboratory professionals to examine blood cells in a whole new way.



*Pictured is Caty Bruening, Lab Manager, at left, and Robin Gray, MLS. As the Key Operator, Robin completed the validation studies and implementation of the new CellaVision system. Slides that until recently could just be viewed under the microscope can now be viewed on the computer screen, and can even be enlarged, as pictured here. Images can also be saved and sent electronically.*

Traditionally, parts of blood testing required a lab technologist to review cells manually under a microscope. With our new system, high-quality digital images of blood cells are captured and displayed on a screen, allowing our lab team to review them more efficiently while still applying their expert knowledge.

One of the greatest benefits is the ability to securely store and quickly share these images with off-site specialists when needed. If additional expertise is required, images can be sent to the Hematology Pathologists at Emplify Health in La Crosse or other experts for consultation. This will help facilitate faster diagnosis of certain blood disorders, including leukemia, sickle cell disease, and some parasitic infections.

With approximately 8,000 of these systems currently in use worldwide, we are proud to bring this advanced technology to our community. It's another way we're working to ensure our patients receive timely, high-quality care—close to home.

This new CellaVision instrument was recently upgraded from donations to our Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation. Craig happens to be the President of our Foundation and now knows firsthand how important this technology is!

**Caty Bruening, Lab Manager**

## Lab Reflections from the 1970s-1980s



BY DIXIE LIBBEY

When Dixie Libbey of rural Lansing was working in the Lab, she only had two other coworkers to help her cover the demand. With a total of three lab techs, she took the call every third night all year long. After marrying her husband, Jack Libbey, and moving to Village Creek outside of Lansing, she tried renting an apartment in Waukon for those nights she was on call, but it got to be too much to try to keep up two different homes.

“Our home in Village Creek, where I still reside, is 20 miles away from Waukon, so many nights I would just stay overnight in the hospital doctor’s lounge because we did get called in quite a bit for emergencies,” explains Libbey. “We always had our morning rounds to do first, going to the patient rooms and ER to draw the patients. We had many tests to run and had to put them all manually through the machine, doing our own maintenance on them as well to keep them all going. We had a lot of quality control in those days and I am sure they still do, but it is much more sophisticated now.”

“I remember using glass tubing with the anticoagulant already in the tube. Those patients on blood thinners always had to be drawn at a certain time of the day, but fortunately, blood

thinners have really changed in that respect. Many were using Heparin instead of Coumadin like they do now, which does not need to be drawn as often.”

Dixie kept up that on-call schedule of every third night for nearly 20 years before moving to the Medical Associates Clinic right next door, working with Jan Kemp in the Laboratory and X-ray area.

“Jan and I were involved with the plans for the new Mayo Clinic, which they planned to build next to the hospital that opened in 1997 and is now the VMH Waukon Medical Clinic. We still did a lot of business with the hospital Lab even after opening our new clinic because many tests needed to be done right away and they were much faster than sending our tests up to La Crosse.”

“I had a lot of years at VMH and I loved it! I met so many people and the coworkers were awesome. I have so many good memories!”



*Dixie pictured in the old Lab on the lower level of the hospital and, at right, her today in the current Lab, impressed with the advances in technology.*



Birthing Services

# Testimonial



*Michael and Kylee Sweeney of Waukon pictured with their newborn son, McKrae, in our Maternity Services Suite.*

We had such an incredible experience delivering at our small-town hospital. The one-on-one care made all the difference, and Dr. Dave Schwartz was truly amazing. He made us feel so comfortable and supported every step of the way.

We are completely in love with our precious baby boy, McKrae, and feel so grateful we were able to bring him into the world surrounded by such an amazing team. The nurses at VMH were beyond supportive and caring. My daytime nurse, Carly, even stayed nearly two hours after her shift ended just to continue supporting me—she was so kind and selfless. My delivery nurse, Morgan, was also incredible and made me feel so encouraged and cared for throughout the entire process.

Another one of the most special parts of our experience was that our “baby catcher” was actually my best friend of 25 years, Lauren, which made the moment even more meaningful—she’s the best.

Beyond that, every nurse we encountered throughout our stay was incredibly kind, attentive, and supportive. Each day we felt genuinely cared for, with every staff member going above and beyond to make sure baby, myself and my husband were comfortable, informed, and at ease. Their compassion, encouragement, and willingness to help in even the smallest ways made such a difference in our experience, and we are so grateful for the entire nursing team at VMH.

Overall, our experience with the staff at VMH couldn’t have been better. We truly believe everyone deserves a doctor like Dr. Schwartz—he even delivered me, and now he’s delivered my son. Not many doctors take the time to hug you and your husband as you leave with your newborn and tell you how proud they are of you. That is something we will never forget.

We feel so blessed and thankful for such a beautiful experience bringing our sweet boy into the world.

**Kylee Sweeney, Waukon**

# Water Birth

The Way Nature Intended



**VMH**  
VETERANS MEMORIAL  
HOSPITAL & CLINICS



*Compliments of Lamar Advertising*



Birthing Services

# Testimonial



This was my husband and I's first baby. It's always been strongly recommended to doctor with Doctor Schwartz and I am now eternally grateful and have the utmost respect. Doctor Schwartz gave a sense of full peace throughout the entire delivery of our son.

Thank you Veterans Memorial Hospital. We're proud to call you ours.

**Taylor Stock, Waukon**



*Duel and Taylor Stock pictured in the hospital with their newborn son, Auben Dean Stock. Photos By BMW Photography Productions*



## BIRTHING SERVICES TEAM

*at Veterans Memorial Hospital*



**David Schwartz, MD**



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

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



## BIRTHING CENTER

Our Birthing Center team will support your personal birth plan as you welcome your new baby. Dr. Dave Schwartz, Nurse Midwife & Nurse Practitioner Katy Maker, and our skilled obstetric nurses provide exceptional, personalized care in a warm, family-friendly environment. Delivering close to home with visits from loved ones is truly priceless.

We offer three spacious delivery suites and one water birth suite, all designed with the comforts of home. Water birth, or laboring in water, is an option for low-risk mothers seeking a natural approach. Some moms choose to deliver in the tub, while others move to a bed. Both Dr. Schwartz and Katy Maker are certified in water birth. Benefits may include improved comfort, relaxation, flexibility in positioning, and often shorter labor.

A Lactation Consultant is available during your stay and after you return home. We welcome patients at any stage of pregnancy and pride ourselves on personalized care.

To schedule an appointment in Waukon, call 563-568-5530, or in Postville, call 563-864-7221. For a tour, contact Jayne McCormick, CNO, OB Manager, at 563-568-3411.

# Hospital Reflections

## from a Devoted Board of Trustee

I worked as a nurse at the hospital when Jim and I first moved to town in 1961. Jim's uncle was sick at the time, so I worked at the hospital for a short while and did some private duty as well. That is why I was so glad to join the Board of Trustees because of my association with health care.

I served from 1981 to 1991 and still have my plaque for my years of service! When I came on, I was with AV Palmer, Valier Dundee, and Jim Klense, who recruited me... they were all great guys and a real pleasure to work with!

I have so many fond memories of my time on the board. They always fed us a meal when we came in for our meetings. Dr. Withers was the Chief Medical Director at that time and he always enjoyed his desserts! He was quite the gentleman, too. I still have a letter from him welcoming me to the board and telling me what I needed to do.



*Helen pictured receiving her plaque for her years of dedication to the Board of Trustees, from Administrator Dan Woods and board member Dave Martin, at left.*

The main issue we dealt with was deciding whether or not to affiliate with one of the two hospitals in La Crosse. Both of them wanted us to partner with them. We spent a lot of time visiting different hospitals that were affiliated, checking them out for different reasons. We took our jobs very seriously and all got along very well. After many meetings and much discussion, we made the decision not to

affiliate and have always been very happy with that decision.

When I came on the board, Jerry Adamek was the administrator, who was also associated with Good Sam. Then we had a temporary administrator, whose name was Lynn Byrne. He was retired but really helped us out and we were able to get him to stay about a year longer than planned...he was excellent! Our Director of Nursing at that time was Jackie Wennes and then

*Helen Johnson of Waukon served on our hospital's Board of Trustees for 10 years. She is pictured holding her plaque in appreciation for her years of service, surrounded by many of the newspaper clippings she collected during her treasured time on the board.*



Betty Hogan took her position when she left.

Another one of the biggest decisions we made was to purchase the house on the corner from Grace Moe, where the Waukon Clinic parking lot is now located.

Possibly the most important decision we made during my term was to approve the hospital as a Swing Bed facility in 1984! This program has really kept the hospital going, remaining a very viable service for both the hospital and community ever since.

I have stayed very supportive of the hospital over the years. Jim and I were both there during COVID and Jim did pass away there. I get very upset when anyone degrades our hospital. We are so blessed to have an ER and helicopter service right here! People don't understand the difference of being treated here or going many miles for help. It is a real blessing to have this hospital in our community.

I have been a patient here a few other times as well and it is so wonderful to be able to come here and know your nursing staff and doctors. Sue McMillan graduated with my son and I love her as my provider.

I was and still am honored to have served on the Veterans Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees!

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# OSTEOPATHIC MANIPULATION TREATMENT

Family physician, Dr. John Swords, is a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine and experienced in manipulations for a whole body approach to manage chronic conditions. Dr. Swords uses a variety of techniques to manipulate muscles, soft tissues and joints to promote self-healing and overall wellness. Techniques typically include soft tissue massage, joint articulation, muscle energy resistance, and high-velocity thrusts to ease pain and improve mobility.

Osteopathic Manipulation Treatments aim to align overall structure and function while treating and preventing chronic pain and other conditions that affect every system in your body, including your musculoskeletal system, digestive system, nervous system and immune system. By realigning your body and restoring balance to bones and muscles, Osteopathic Manipulation Treatment allows your entire body to work better as a whole.

Treatments are available for both inpatients and outpatients.

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**Address structural problems in your joints, muscles and tissues**

**Improve circulation (how blood and other fluids flow through your body)**

**Prevent health problems and help your body heal itself by improving how your body works as a unit**

**Soothe tight muscles, relieve joint stiffness and improve range of motion**



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- Uses a variety of techniques to manipulate muscles, soft tissues, and joints
- Promotes self healing and overall wellness

# Memorials & Donations

IMO = In Memory of  
IHO = In Honor of

The following contributions were received by the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation from March 2025-February 2026. Donations benefit and support the health care of citizens in this area and are appreciated by both the hospital and the foundation. (Annual Campaign Recognition will be included in the Fall Newsletter.)

## **IMO Rev. Msgr. Ed Lechtenberg**

Ken & Rose Ann Mark

## **IMO Cletus Fish**

Ron & Nancy Adam  
Mary Ann Hager  
The Country Garden

## **IMO Sandra Fish**

Jane Dietrich  
Anonymous Donor  
Wayne Fish  
Patsy Kerndt  
Lyle & Cindy Leikvold  
Helen Palmer  
Dave & Gail Prestemson  
Dean Schellhammer  
Bill & Beth Shafer  
Linda Siegrist  
Larry & Sharon Snitker

## **IMO Dr. Bill Withers**

Sue Roberts  
Dean Schellhammer  
Carol Sivesind  
Bill & Linda Withers

## **IMO Doc & Lib Withers**

Bill Jr., Jim, Elizabeth (Jane) & John

## **IMO Diana Eickelberg**

Dean Eickelberg

## **IMO Mary Lou Publitz**

Marilyn Larson

## **IMO Lawrence & Pat Powell**

Ken & Gloria Krambeer  
Kevin & Ann Quillin  
Mary Beth Regan

## **IHO Eunice Kolsrud**

Bob & Karen Fossum

## **IHO Joan Leiran**

Linda Siegrist

## **IMO Nancy Fellows Larson**

Richard & Joan Leiran  
Ann Rademaker

## **IMO Karen Milton**

Clarke Simmonds

## **IMO Frank D. Jones**

Mary Anne Otting

## **IMO Sheryl Peterson**

Ernie & Donnalee Osland  
Chuck & Lois Votsmier

## **IMO Bob Hager**

Audrey Angel  
Cheryl Bollman  
Carl & Betty Christianson  
Don & Mary Jane McGraw

## **IMO Michael Johnson**

Don & Mary Jane McGraw

## **IMO Rose Larking**

Don & Mary Jane McGraw

## **IMO Judy Byrnes**

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# Why Local Health Care Matters

In rural communities, local health care is more than convenience—it is a lifeline. When someone is experiencing chest pain, a broken bone, or a serious illness, time matters. Having emergency services, diagnostic imaging, laboratory testing, rehabilitation, and primary care available locally eliminates long drives to regional medical centers. In many cases, that means avoiding 60–90 minutes of travel time that can make a critical difference in outcomes.

Local access also reduces stress for patients and families. Elderly residents do not need to arrange long-distance transportation. Working parents lose fewer hours of pay. Family members can visit loved ones in the hospital without taking an entire day off work.

Local health care is also a cornerstone of a strong rural economy. Veterans Memorial Hospital is one of the area's largest employers, providing stable, professional jobs to over 280 people. From nurses and physicians to lab technicians, therapists, and support staff, these team members deliver high-quality care and strengthen our community. They live locally, shop locally, and contribute to schools, churches, and community organizations, reinforcing the community spirit that makes rural Iowa strong.

Beyond employment, a strong hospital makes the area more attractive to businesses and families considering relocation. Companies look at access to health services when deciding



*Beth Shafer  
Growth & Development  
Coordinator*

where to invest. Young families want to know they can deliver babies, treat injuries, and manage chronic conditions without leaving the county. Retirees consider proximity to quality care before settling in a community.

Across rural America, hospitals face increasing financial pressure. Declining reimbursement rates, rising costs, and workforce shortages challenge small facilities. When rural hospitals close, communities lose far more than a building—they lose jobs, emergency access, and a key driver of economic stability.

Choosing to schedule appointments locally when possible, supporting hospital initiatives, and contributing through philanthropy to the Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation all help ensure services remain strong and sustainable.

Veterans Memorial Hospital is more than a place to receive treatment. It is where neighbors care for neighbors. It is where babies are welcomed into the world, injuries are mended, and lives are saved. It is where families find reassurance during some of their most difficult moments.

Local health care matters because local communities matter. By supporting and utilizing Veterans Memorial Hospital, residents of Waukon and the surrounding communities are investing not only in their own health but also in the long-term vitality of rural northeast Iowa.

## Keeping Care Local Requires Community Support.



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## Scenes from our Golden Sledgehammer Event March 7, Kicking Off the Construction Project!



# There's No Place Like Home!

Nola Palmer of Waukon recently got her wish to be 'at home' on skilled care following her knee replacement, but in a roundabout way. Nola had been attending physical therapy at VMH to help with the pain in her knee, but it continued to degenerate over the years, leaving her walking painfully on a very crooked leg. Her physical therapist, Amy Robinson, alerted an orthopedic surgeon at Emplify Health by Gundersen in La Crosse to the severity of Nola's knee. He agreed to see her within the next two weeks and ordered her to remain in a wheelchair with a brace on her leg until her surgery date, 30 days later, for fear her leg would actually break by that time.

"Nola's knee became severely angled over the past two years," explains Amy Robinson, Rehab Director. "She had a lot of pain and difficulty walking. I was so happy that her orthopedic surgeon agreed to perform the procedure. She can now walk again and is pain-free!"



*Pictured with Nola are two very key players in her care. Dacia Johnson, Rehab Clerk, helped get Nola her needed stress test the very next day at VMH and scheduled all of her therapy appointments, with Amy Robinson, Rehab Director, to the right, who made the call to get Nola to see the orthopedic surgeon who performed the successful surgery.*

Nola had asked about coming back to VMH on skilled care for her recovery, but because she was discharged back home the day following her surgery, she did not meet the three-day hospital stay requirement to qualify for skilled care. She returned home on oxygen the next day following surgery with the help of family and friends agreeing to stay with her. But then the following day, Nola was not feeling well. She came to the ER at VMH, where she was diagnosed with pneumonia. Nola was admitted to the hospital and since she had a three-day stay at VMH, she then qualified for the skilled care she had wished for!

Nola remained in the hospital on swing bed skilled care for the next week, receiving incredible physical and occupational therapy, until she could go home independently, with only someone needed to stay with her at night.

"I was really hoping I could come back to VMH on skilled care, but I wasn't kept in the hospital long enough after my surgery to qualify for it. So this pneumonia was a blessing in disguise!" explains Nola. "I was able to qualify for skilled care and receive great rehabilitation twice per day throughout my stay and could then go home and stay there on my own with help at night."

Before Nola's surgery, her physician made arrangements for her to have a cardiac stress test in La Crosse, but Nola was not looking forward to having to travel for this. At therapy, Amy Robinson explained to her that she could just have it done here instead, so Amy connected with Dietsy Weymiller, RN, Cardiac Rehab Nurse, who reached out to La Crosse and got

it rescheduled at VMH for the next day.

"Our community has many senior citizens who prefer to stay as close to home as possible for their care," adds Amy Robinson. "VMH provides a lot of quality specialty care here in Waukon. It's not necessary to travel out of town. I've also noticed that our clients feel so comfortable and more at ease working with VMH staff...people they recognize and can relate to. We are happy to provide top-notch specialized healthcare."

## A History of Care

"My husband, Norbert, and I used the hospital services here at home throughout the years. I worked there as a nurse when we were first married, back in 1960-1963, before I went to work for Good Sam, then returned after my children were grown. I even delivered a baby in the elevator once! A mom came into the ER, which was a little room by the surgery department at that time, and she was ready to have that baby. I took her across the hall into the elevator to go up to OB but had to lay her down so the baby could be born. The OB nurse came running with the OB pack of supplies as soon as she heard the elevator, since it was only used for OB patients at that time, and we cared for that beautiful new baby!"

"Later, in 1970, Norb broke his neck falling down a pine tree. We came to the ER and were then transferred to Rochester. Daryl Gilbert had an old station wagon as the ambulance that we used for the transfer. He asked me to go with him since I had gone on many calls with him when I worked here. I wasn't sure I would ever walk again after riding in that for two hours! Norb was up in Rochester for six weeks and made a full recovery."

"We had our babies here. Norb had his broken hip repaired here by Dr. Lyons and was able to stay here on skilled care following the repair. That is how I knew about this great, skilled care service and wished for it myself. We are very grateful for this hospital. We are just so glad it is here and we definitely want to keep it!"



*Nola before surgery, walking on a very crooked, painful leg.*



*Nola post-surgery with a straight leg and walking with NO PAIN!*



*@  
Thankful*

# ER PATIENT

“Last fall, Karen Teslow and I had driven over to Waukon to enjoy lunch at the S&D Cafe when I went totally blank and collapsed,” explains Shirley Johnson of Decorah. “The staff at the restaurant knew immediately I needed to get to the ER. I don’t know how many people were in the restaurant at the time, but I must have scared everyone half to death!”

“I don’t remember anything until I woke up in the Waukon Emergency Room with many staff members all around me, each working efficiently with their own job to do. They were thinking that maybe I had a stroke, but it was quickly found that I had low potassium, which caused this incident. My provider was extremely knowledgeable and really educated me on my condition. I never realized potassium controlled so much of your life! They wanted to keep me for observation overnight, then I went home the next day and have been doing fine ever since.”

Karen adds “We called the ambulance right away, and since they were right up the hill, it took no time at all. We called Shirley’s son when we got to the hospital and he was able to come over to be with her. The staff was very kind and kept us informed as to what was going on. So thankful for the quick and professional response through all of this.”

“The people in the hospital were fantastic and so kind. They were diligent and extremely caring,” concludes Shirley. “I am very thankful the incident happened while we were in the restaurant and not on our drive, and very happy with how it all was handled. Veterans Memorial Hospital can be very proud of their ER and nursing staff!”



*Shirley Johnson at left, pictured with her good friend, Karen Teslow, both of Decorah.*



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Persistently Pursuing

# SWING BED CARE

From age 35 on, Mark Heiderscheit of New Albin has been a loyal patient of Veterans Memorial Hospital and very grateful for the variety of services offered. As a child growing up in New Albin, he remembers receiving his medical care as a child from Dr. Thornton in Lansing, going to his office in the big limestone house, walking across the porch into the patient room, and most memorable, seeing all of the needles he had ready to use on his patients!

Mark was first diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 35 and began working with Angie Mettelle, RN, VMH Diabetes Educator, shortly thereafter. His next experience at VMH was his first colonoscopy at the age of 45, due to his family history, and has continued having them here from then on. He has also had success in the Surgery Department with Dr. Greg Valkosky, but the most recent experience he is most grateful for is the swing bed skilled care he received after his knee replacement last fall.

“When I began working with Angie Mettelle for my diabetes management, I realized right away what an intelligent girl she is,” explains Mark. “She got me through some very tough times over the years. I always tell everyone who has questions about diabetes to go to Waukon to talk to Angie. She will have the answers and the help they need.”

“I have spent time at the hospital as well with a foot infection and surgery when I needed an amputation of one of my toes. The surgery staff and Dr. Valkosky were all amazing and I continue to see him when needed,” adds Mark. “A couple of the surgery staff members, Andi Goltz and Brooke Weighner, made me feel so welcomed and at ease, even remembering me as a patient with my first colonoscopy. That just doesn’t happen at larger hospitals. I felt very cared for.”

“Last fall, I was dealing with a lot of knee pain and found out I had no cartilage left in my knee, and it was only bone on bone. I had a knee replacement at Mayo in La Crosse and was not able to go home on my own. My wonderful



*Mark Heiderscheit of New Albin first began seeking his health care at Veterans Memorial Hospital after he was diagnosed with diabetes. He is pictured here with Angie Mettelle, Diabetes Educator, who initially helped him take control of it and continues to coach him as he successfully manages it.*

sister, Julie, who is a retired nurse, invited me into her home as I recovered, but their home was small and she was so busy with her husband’s care, I was just praying I would get into swing bed skilled care at VMH.

I was so thankful when I received that phone call, my insurance had accepted me! The person I have to thank for that is Karen Mahr in Medical Records. She went the extra mile to get me in here. She got it approved through my insurance company that I could stay here for up to three weeks.

Jayne McCormick, the Director of Nursing, should be very proud of her nursing staff...they are just super nice and took great care of me. The night nurses had great personalities and many of the staff, like Angie, Brad and Rosie would even wheel me outside to get some fresh air since I couldn’t go out by myself.

I only needed one week at VMH in skilled care until I was able to go back home on my own. After returning home, I drove to therapy three times a week for outpatient care. One day, I came walking in poorly and they asked if I was having hip pain, and I told them, ‘Yes.’ They immediately laid me down on the treatment table and put my hip back into place. They are so smart and always know just what you need.

This hospital is my hometown hospital. I tell everyone, if you need surgery, be sure you come back here for your therapy. The entire staff in Physical Therapy, especially Brad, Amy R., Abby, and Amy G., and Tami, Mel and Amy E. in Occupational Therapy were outstanding. I really enjoyed it down there. Even Vicki and the other housekeepers were so friendly. My provider, Sue McMillan, is a great person and I get along with her so well.

I am getting my other knee done this summer and plan to come back here again!”



*Mark is pictured here with many of the team members who cared for him while he was on skilled care to recover from his knee replacement. Pictured, left to right, are Krystal Grotegut, RN; Carmen McCormick, C.N.A.; Mark Heiderscheit; Karen Mahr, Medical Records; Natalie Kelly, RN; and Laura Keatley, Hospitalist.*

# Behavioral Health Care

## NOW VERY ACCESSIBLE In Northeast Iowa!

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*THREE Behavioral Health Nurse Practitioners on staff are available to meet privately, in person, offering prescribing and counseling services for anyone of any age. Appointments are completely confidential.*

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Postville Clinic 563-864-7221  
to make an appointment.



### Anyone Can Make a Referral to Either Program!

We accept self-referrals for either program, as well as from primary care providers, specialists, family members, friends, community groups, and nursing or residential facilities.



Angela Taylor,  
PMHNP

Tara Fink,  
PMHNP

Janet Hunter,  
PMHNP

## NEW Senior Life Solutions



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#### *Services Include:*

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*Left to Right: Katherine Osmonson - Office & Patient Coordinator, Mandy Pettit, RN - Program Director and Kayla Baxter - Therapist.*

Our new Senior Life Solutions provides outpatient services to patients with Medicare insurance coverages experiencing depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges associated with aging. These services include group therapy, individual therapy, psychiatric assessment, and medication management. Senior Life Solutions staff includes a board-certified psychiatrist, a licensed therapist, a registered nurse, and other professionals dedicated to the emotional well-being of the seniors in our community. Call us at 563-568-5560.

## Hospital History - Carl & Betty Christianson

Carl and Betty Christianson of Waukon both worked at Veterans Memorial Hospital in the 1970s and were instrumental in developing many of the services that are still practiced today. Together, they share their fond memories of their health care days at VMH.

"The first time I ever saw Betty, she was in a carload of nursing students who had been in a car accident and brought to the ER. Due to my military training, I would often get called to ER to help. All the other girls had family members there to comfort them, except Betty, so I comforted her! She soon graduated and was employed as a nurse at the hospital. One day, when we were alone in the elevator, I hit the emergency stop button, gave her a kiss and turned it back on again! She was mad and huffed off the elevator into the OB Department. Years later, Betty was here in the hospital for hip surgery at the same time they were installing the new cab in that same elevator. I told the engineer what I had done many years earlier, and a few days later, he gave me the old emergency stop from the elevator. It became and still is the doorbell at our house!"

Betty adds, "Whenever our granddaughter would visit, she would always go ring the doorbell so that Papa had to kiss me!"



*Betty pictured today at the hospital nurse's station with Brad Krambeer, Certified Athletic Trainer, who began his 30+ year rehabilitation career with Betty at Dennis Montet's outpatient physical therapy office, which was located in the current Allamakee Extension Office location.*

he went on the bottle, beware, because it was hard to ever get boys off the bottle!"

Carl worked at VMH from 1970 to 1976. He was in the last high school class to graduate from Waterville High School in 1960 and left to serve in the Navy just three days later. He returned to Waukon with 10 years of extensive medical training gained during his service in the Navy and was hired immediately by Reverend Adams, the Administrator, and Eloise Meyer, RN, creating and setting up the first Medical-Surgical Supply unit for the hospital. Then along came all the other hats he wore during his six years of service, including helping out

in the ER whenever there was a serious accident; prepping male patients for surgery and assisting patients in surgery; creating a staff newspaper; stocking the Gilbert's ambulance with supplies and helping cover ambulance calls; organizing the first disaster drill; and even setting up the traction system for patients in the patient rooms.

"Sometimes I even had to make a fast trip to a nearby hospital for more supplies or meds. Once Dr. Rominger told me I was the best thing that had happened to this place in a long time. When he retired, he gave me many of his instruments that had the US Army stamped on them. I still have them at home."

What the hospital administrators did not know was that Carl was an undercover narcotics agent at the same time he was working at the hospital. "I disliked drugs so much after Vietnam, I grew my hair long and went undercover, helping with many arrests, all unknown by administration."

"I enjoyed writing the staff newspaper. Esther Sunderman, RN, was the In-Service Training RN, and she always had something educational in each edition and I appreciated that. Betty also was sure to supply a good recipe for the newspaper, too!"

One of Carl's largest accomplishments during his years at VMH was the community campaign for the 1976 addition to the hospital, which added the current ER and X-ray areas.

"The hospital really needed a PR person for this campaign, so they assigned it to me. I put together a slide show and carried my projector and slides all around town many evenings to show all the civic groups how small our ER and X-ray areas were. We needed a vote to pass for the construction of this addition and we did it!"

"Both Betty and I would take turns helping the Gilberts run their ambulance service before the hospital took it over. I thought if I helped him out by stocking it with supplies without charging him, he would bring his patients here, and he did!"

"I remember helping pin my grandmother's leg in surgery with Dr. Stull, the surgeon, who had to drill a hole in her leg. She looked up at us and said, 'Can I hold something for you?' She was 90 at the time and lived to be 99½."

"Regulations also came through that we needed to start holding disaster drills and keeping a record of them. Again, with my field experience, it became my job. That was before the days of moulage and disaster kits, so I went to the hospital kitchen and asked them to save their meat bones for me so I



*Carl pictured today in the current medical-surgical supply unit of the hospital.*

*Hospital History ... Continued on Page 19*

could wrap them up like a broken bone.”

Carl and Betty both witnessed the first ancillary, or outpatient, services of physical therapy and occupational therapy being added to the hospital in 1974. This is when Physical Therapist, Dennis Montet came to set up the first PT department. They also started an inhalation therapy for burn victims, spearheaded new regulations that came about requiring inspection for accreditation and Carl and Linda Wilgenbush, RN, attended training classes in La Crosse to implement the first 12-lead electrocardiogram unit at VMH in 1975.

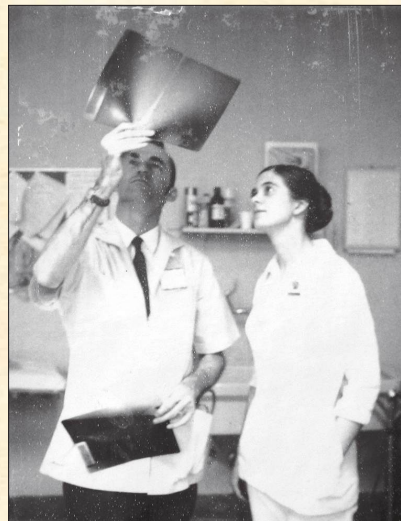
Betty worked as a nurse at the hospital for a few years before going over to the Waukon Medical Associates Clinic with Drs. Bray, Withers, Rominger, Boom and later Drs. Perry and Olson who joined them. She spent 20 years at that clinic while still taking call overnight at the hospital and helping with the ambulance service.



*Carl Christianson is pictured in the front middle of the Medical Surgical Unit, which he developed. He is shown with many co-workers, including, from left to right, Jan Kemp, Carey Griffin, Don Teply, Mary Brandt, and Jane Kallevang.*

“During those years, my dad, Chuck Pettingill, took over as the ambulance coordinator and he and I took call most

holidays and every Monday night. He would swing by my house to pick me up on his way to get to the ambulance,” remembers Betty. “He did the scheduling and it was very special to work with my dad. Fred Mathews was the one who talked him into taking the EMT course when he was around 45 years of age.”



*Betty Christianson, pictured with Dr. Bill Withers, with whom she worked with for most of her life at the hospital, medical clinic, then cared for him as a private duty nurse in his later years.*

“One day, the ambulance had two codes that my dad had been on, and as he was bringing the second one in, he coded himself, for the third code of the day. They called me to come in to help, not knowing he was my dad

and they felt so bad when they realized it, but I was glad to be there with him. They shocked him about six times total with success, then moved him into patient room 209, which was our cardiac room on the patient floor. Dr. McMullan said to me, ‘This is your dad? You are handling this well,’ and I just said, ‘He needs me’, so they let me stay with him.”

“We flew him and one other cardiac patient out that day,

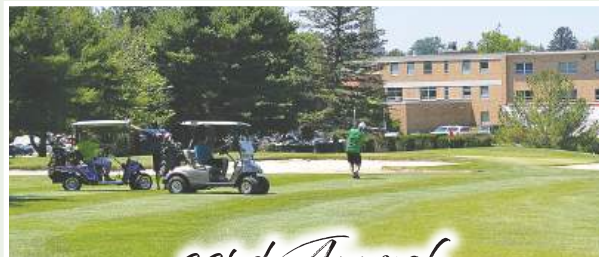
but the other patient passed away. Dad wanted to go home so badly and didn’t want to wait for surgery, so I had to hypnotize him, pretending we were going for a canoe ride on our favorite lake, in order to get him to settle down. (Hypnosis, as well as acupuncture, were two of my certifications.) Dad ended up with four or five bypasses and was soon back to work!”

“I then left the clinic and went to work with our good friend, Dennis Montet, in his private outpatient physical therapy clinic, which he began while still working with inpatients at the hospital. His office was located in the current Allamakee County Extension Office in south Waukon. In 1993, the hospital began managing these outpatient therapy services and look how popular they are now! The entire rehabilitation staff are so good... I know, I have used them many times myself as a hospital inpatient and outpatient.”

Carl left the hospital in 1976 and was then elected the new Clerk of District Court, beginning that new role in 1977.

“The day I knew I had to leave health care was the day we had a car accident come into the ER with a mom and three children. It just brought back too many memories from my combat duties, so I decided to go into politics instead! I was the Clerk of District Court until 2002 while continuing to serve in the Naval Reserves.”

Carl and Betty both continue to be huge supporters of the hospital, utilizing all the local health care services they can. Both of their sons, Mark and Jay, were born here and Carl and Betty even celebrated their 52nd wedding anniversary with pre-colonoscopy consultations here at VMH!



## *33rd Annual* **FOUNDATION GOLF TOURNAMENT MONDAY, JUNE 22**

The Veterans Memorial Health Care Foundation’s annual Three-Person Best-Shot Golf Tournament is set for Monday, June 22, 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, dinner, and prizes for everyone will all be provided for the donation of \$100 per person or \$300 per team.

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.

# MEDICAL STAFF

Dave Schwartz, MD  
John Swords, MD  
Susan McMillan, ARNP  
Minji Ransom, ARNP  
Alex Berns, ARNP  
Katy Maker, ARNP, CNM  
Hannah Kelly, ARNP  
Mason Kerian, 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

Emplify Gundersen  
Cardiologists

## Pathology

Emplify Gundersen  
Pathologists

## Radiology

Emplify 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, CRMA

## Sleep Study

Courtney Whitney, DO  
Adriana Escandon Sandino, MD

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