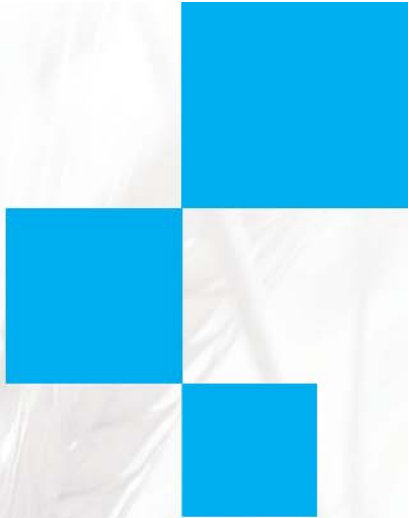


HOUSECALL

Quarterly



FALL 2008

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Breaking Ground



COVER STORY:

Large crowd attends celebration on Tuesday, October 7th to break ground for a new healthcare destination.

Story on Page 3



VALLEY COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM

From The Desk of Larry Schrage

Dear Friends,

I write on one of the most beautiful fall days ever; perhaps when you read this, the weather will certainly have changed but nevertheless isn't every season in our rural communities a wonderful day? Although you will read elsewhere of the progress of our building project, today is the day the "Cats Woke Up" and dirt began to fly.

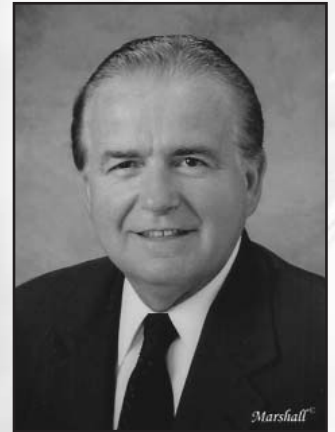
This quarterly newsletter is designed for you and contains health care information I hope is informative. We invite you to offer comments on how we can continue to improve our communication to you. I also invite you to personally tell me how we can do things better as we work together for the future of health care delivery and service in this region.

Many of you have asked about the designation term "Critical Access Hospital" (CAH). Complexities aside, I answer quite simply that this happens to be one piece of good federal legislation, created in 1997, which in my opinion saved rural health care in America.

During the 1980's and 1990's it became apparent that the continuing pattern of increasing health care costs was not being balanced to a downward trend in overall rural populations. This was even more detrimental because the government made a mistake in 1983 removing Medicare cost based methodology from rural provider payments, resulting in increasingly negative hospital financial performance. Of course as patient and physician expectations increased due to advances in science and technology, associated expenses increased disproportionate to revenue. Given that the healthcare industry is highly regulated, the expense of meeting stringent regulatory compliance standards was also a key consideration. Quite frankly what broke the camel's back was the competitive nature of sole community providers to match each other stride for stride resulting in the necessity of duplicating services and diagnostic equipment, all in order to compete and at the economic cost of a dwindling patient population.

Valley County Health System (VCHS) is one of 1,283 CAH's in the United States (55 in Nebraska). CAH designation permits VCHS certification to receive cost-based reimbursement from Medicare. It also provides a minimum corridor of 35 miles between like hospitals. Why was this legislation important? Because the federal government was reacting to changing times, as we all must do from time to time. The legislative determination to consolidate rural health care, with restrictions, has performed well.

So we continue to move forward, learning from the past to accommodate our future.



Larry E. Schrage
Chief Executive Officer

VALLEY COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM *Upcoming Events*

Caring Across Generations presents
"Alzheimers & the Holidays"

Thursday, November 20th
7:00 PM

Valley View Living Center Atrium

VCHS Foundation 55 Plus
Old Fashioned Christmas Tour

Sunday, December 14th
2:00 PM

Grand Island

VCHS Foundation Gala
"Blast from the Past"

Saturday, January 17th
6:00 PM

Ord Veteran's Club



Valley County Health System *Breaks Ground on New Hospital Facility*

A large crowd of approximately 250 were in attendance as Valley County Health System broke ground on a new 67,000 square foot replacement hospital facility on Tuesday, October 7. The celebration took place at the new building site near 27th and M Streets in Ord.

Remarks were made by VCHS Board Chair Kara Fischer, Valley County Supervisor Chairman Bob

Sevenker, Honored Guest Governor Heineman and VCHS CEO Larry Schrage. Following the remarks and groundbreaking ceremony, Valley County Health System hosted business after hours, which included a virtual tour of the new building and hors d'oeuvres.

Site preparation will be complete by December 1st. Construction of the new facility will begin in March 2009.



Kara Fischer, VCHS Board Chair addresses a large crowd at the ground breaking.



Approximately 250 people were in attendance as Valley County Health System broke ground.

Bond sales for new hospital going according to plan - 2nd issue sold

On May 13th Valley County voters gave their approval to a \$21.3 million dollar general obligation bond issue, proceeds to be applied toward the construction of a new hospital. Valley County Health System announced that on Friday, October 10, the second of several issuances realized \$2.68 million dollars in bond sales.

Marc Munford, Assistant Vice President with Ameritas Investment Corporation, appeared before the Valley County Board of Supervisors on October 14 to announce the pre-

sale of the additional \$2.68 million in bonds. The combined sales volume, with the first \$7,220,000 sold in August, now totals \$9,900,000. This issue was sold once again to Nebraska area banks and investors.

Conditions of the bond sale to build the new replacement hospital require that only a maximum of \$10 million dollars can be sold each calendar year in order to stay bank qualified. The balance of the bonds will be marketed in the first six months of 2009.



Ground breaking begins at the future site of Valley County Health System.

VCHS adds latest breakthrough in *Ultrasound Imaging Technology*



Kristen Ryschon (left) and Pat Stiger, Valley County Health System Radiology Technologists with the new Philips iU22 ultrasound system.

Valley County Health System has acquired the iU22 ultrasound system from Philips Medical Systems, providing advanced diagnostic imaging capabilities with an intelligent system interface that streamlines ultrasound and echocardiogram exams for patients and clinicians.

The system's powerful imaging capabilities support a variety of common exams, including thyroid, abdomen, OB and testicular exams. It also offers advanced imaging capabilities specifically beneficial in the evaluation of breast masses.

"Ultrasound imaging is hugely beneficial because it is a relatively low cost and non-invasive way to look inside the body," said Sue Diehl, Radiology Manager. "With the new Philips system, we are acquiring an extremely high level of diagnostic information and can provide answers for our patients more quickly and easily. Plus, results from the ultrasound exam often reduce the need for more invasive procedures."

The new iU22 equipment enables radiology technologists to:

- Make ultrasound exams much faster.
- Help patients and their physician better visualize and understand their condition.
- Help identify the nature of suspicious breast lesions sooner utilizing new, higher resolution, higher frequency transducers.
- Enhance diagnostic capability, thus reducing or eliminating the need for more expensive or invasive tests and procedures.
- Provide clearer ultrasound images, especially in difficult-to-image patients.

Because it can be used in the most delicate conditions without major side effects, ultrasound has become one of the most popular diagnostic methods among both patients and physicians. Ultrasound uses high-frequency sound waves to produce moving images of the body's internal soft tissue structures. It provides a safe, fast and relatively painless means of diagnostic imaging on an outpatient basis.



A 24 week old fetus as seen on the new Philips iU22 ultrasound system.



Philips iU22 Ultrasound System

In addition, the imaging department at Valley County Health System provides a comprehensive range of diagnostic services to both inpatients and outpatients. These services include: X-ray, CT Scan, MRI, Nuclear Medicine, Echocardiogram, DEXA, and Mammography. If you feel you might benefit from one of the procedures above, talk to your doctor.

Valley County Health System is pleased to be able to offer the iU22 ultrasound system as an important improvement in healthcare to our patients.

For more information please contact Valley County Health System at (308) 728-3211.

Burson Estate Donations allow Greater Loup Valley Activities to commit \$1,000,000 for a therapy pool and an expanded Wellness Center

The Greater Loup Valley Activities Board of Directors has committed \$1,000,000 for two community purposes. The source of this donation comes from the \$1,000,000 given by Alfred and Irma Burson during their lifetimes and from Alfred's estate.

A sum of \$400,000 has been committed for an aqua therapy pool and associated room in the Rehabilitation Department in the new Valley County Health System facility. The pool will be used for treatment of physical therapy patients. This was a wish of Mr. Burson as he experienced recovery from his stroke while using the therapy pool at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln. The warmth, buoyancy and gentle resistance of water offers important benefits for people who are recovering from an injury or illness, managing chronic

pain such as arthritis or helping people ease back into an exercise routine. More specifically, people with limited mobility can perform walking and strengthening, flexibility and range of motion exercises in the water that are more difficult or painful to complete on land simply by reducing the effects of gravity. Warm water is also very soothing to painful joints or muscles and relaxes tight or spastic muscles, allowing a more effective program than might be possible on land.

An additional sum of \$600,000 has been committed to be used for creation of an expanded, state of the art Wellness Center in the current hospital. The new center will be at least triple the size of the current center and will feature new equipment and exercise technology. The center will be available for use to all

area residents at an affordable price. The creation of the new wellness center will occur once the existing hospital is vacated and necessary construction can take place. The GLVA Board is pleased to be able to utilize the existing hospital structure for the creation of this new wellness center as it is a fiscally responsible method to provide the community with a pleasant environment in which to exercise.

The funds can be used to provide an attractive and comfortable space for exercise activities and equipment, rather than being spent on an outside structure.

GLVA Board President Curt Sikyta issued the following statement. "I am pleased that we are able to put these projects in place. The hospital construction project gave us an opportunity to partner with the hospital to

meet the wishes of the Burson family and provide an improved wellness component. Our board and members have worked for a long time to make this happen. It is gratifying to see it come to fruition. The Bursons' gifts were used to fund purchases and like items for GLVA during their lifetimes. Those and the estate gift can now make these projects possible. We are thankful to the hospital, the Bursons, all of our donors, and all who have supported us and our projects to make this happen. I believe that it is partnerships such as this between community groups and generous donors that will keep our community vibrant."

Alfred was chairman of the Valley County Board of Supervisors at the time the existing hospital bond issue was passed. He was very supportive of the project and the GLVA Board feels he would be pleased with the use of his donation toward these two purposes in the existing and new facilities.

Valley County Health System thanks the Burson family and the GLVA Board for this commitment of funding to provide additional rehab services in the new facility as well as expanding the wellness program in the existing facility.



Enjoy life (at any age).

Aging isn't easy. No one said it should be.

Sometimes, thinking about the past can get in the way of enjoying the present.

We're here to listen, to talk, to help.

The Heritage Program

at  VALLEY COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM

308-728-4334

Medicare-approved.
Transportation available.



Stepanek named VCHS Employee of the Quarter

Jackie Stepanek has been named Employee of the Quarter at Valley County Health System.

In a letter nominating Stepanek for the honor, a co-worker wrote that Jackie is an extremely warm hearted person who is very understanding and compassionate with nursing home and acute care patients.

“Jackie has really shown good initiative and team work, as well as good patient care skills. She is always willing to help and very pleasant to be around,” another letter stated.

Stepanek, a Physical Therapy Technician in the Rehabilitation Services Department. She has worked at VCHS since March, 2004.

VCHS Auxiliary donates \$1,500 for Fluidotherapy Machine

The Valley County Health System Auxiliary has donated \$1,500 to the VCHS Rehabilitation Department for the purchase of a Fluidotherapy machine to be used by occupational therapy and physical therapy patients. The donated funds came from profits of the Second Hand Rose thrift shop in downtown Ord.

Fluidized therapy (Fluidotherapy) is a high intensity heat modality consisting of a dry whirlpool of finely divided solid particles suspended in a heated air

stream, the mixture having the properties of a liquid. The clinical benefits from the use of Fluidotherapy include relief of local pain, treatment of minor pain and stiffness associated with non-rheumatoid arthritis, increased local blood circulation and the management of joint range of motion when combined with exercise.

Valley County Health System thanks the Auxiliary for their continued support by providing new equipment for our patients.

VCHS to offer community fitness class and wellness challenge this winter

Valley County Health System will be offering a fitness class and wellness challenge for the public this winter. Johnathan Tomjack, Personal Trainer at VCHS will instruct the class, which will also serve as the 2009 Wellness Challenge.

The class will focus on dynamic movements that will strengthen and tone primary core muscles as well as the rest of the body. Balance and stability will also improve through various movements on the ball during the class.

The class will begin Mon. January 5 and run through Fri. February 27. Class time will

be 6:00 am - 7:00 am Monday through Friday at St. Mary's Gym in Ord. The registration fee for the two months is \$30. Each participant will need a 65 cm exercise ball, 2 or 3 lb. hand weights and a yoga mat.

To register for the class, visit the VCHS Physical Therapy department anytime from December 15 through January 2.

Those who choose to participate in the wellness challenge have the option at the time of registration to get weighed or measured in inches.

For more information, contact Johnathan Tomjack at (308) 728-4257.



(l to r) Marie Nielsen, Joan Sintek, VCHS Occupational Therapist, Edna Whitmore and NaTasha Davis demonstrate the new Fluidotherapy machine.

LINDA KEARNS

2008 VCHS Employee of the Year

Linda Kearns, Medical Clinic Receptionist at Ord Family Health Center has been named employee of the year at Valley County Health System. Linda was selected as Employee of the Quarter at Valley County Health System in January 2008 by fellow employees. She received the Employee of the Year award from among three other qualified candidates who were also named Employees of the Quarter during the year. Linda was also nominated for the Nebraska Hospital Association's Caring Kind Award. She will be attending the Caring Kind Luncheon in Lincoln on October 31st.

When Kearns was named

Employee of the Quarter in January, one of Linda's co-workers had this to say about her. "Linda is the epitome of happiness; she is always professional, caring and compassionate whether it is on the phone or in person. She handles herself well under stressful conditions and can easily calm an irate or upset patient. She is always willing to help others and goes out of her way to make sure people are taken care of." Another co-worker said, "Linda is a fantastic mentor for all of us who work with her. She is a great asset to Valley County Health System."

Linda's family includes her spouse, Larry, and their chil-

dren Shannon and Mitch. She has three granddaughters, Zoe, Taylor and Alyssa.

Her hobbies include reading, crocheting, viewing scenery and traveling.



Larry Schrage, CEO presents Linda Kearns, Medical Clinic receptionist with the 2008 Employee of the Year Award.

VALLEY COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM

Promotions:



Christenson hired as VCHS Infection Control & Education Manager

Cheryl Christenson has been hired as the Infection Control, Education and Employee Health Manager for Valley County Health System. Cheryl is a registered nurse who has worked on an as needed basis at Valley View Living Center. She has also been a charge nurse at St. Francis Medical Center in the med-

ical/surgical and orthopedic units for the past 4 years.

Cheryl has been a RN for more than 20 years and has experience in acute care, ambulance and as a Director of Nursing in the long term care setting. Cheryl has her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Pensacola Christian College.

Valley County Health System Auxiliary donations total more than \$32,000

Since the Valley County Health System Auxiliary opened the Second Hand Rose Thrift Shop in downtown Ord in 2005, their contributions to VCHS have totaled more than \$32,000.

Contributions have been used to purchase new signage for the facility as well as provide equipment and furniture for multiple departments. These contributions have included

patio furniture, radio intercoms and a grill for the Valley View Living Center, signs for the hospital, Christmas decorations, fluidotherapy machine for Rehab department, NU Step Machine for cardiac rehab, ice maker for dietary, lab equipment, refrigerator for Hospice room, community education provided by the Hospice Program, a meal delivery cart, patient recliners, GPS systems

for transportation vans, television for wellness center, salt spreader for snow removal and ophthalmoscopes and an otoscope for Ord Family Health Center.

The Auxiliary is an organization operated solely by volunteers.

The Second Hand Rose is open Tuesday through Friday each week from 9 am-5 pm. It is located at 1537 M Street in Ord.



Front row (l to r): Caroline Mentzer, Eulalia Edwards, Sue Blaha, Loretta Darnell, Bev Dubas, Karen Wilson, Heloise Bresley, Phyllis Clement, Virginia Setlik and Linda Ptacnik. Back row (l to r): Jean Williams, Angie Dubas, Dona Young, Mary Klimek, Rita Tolen, Audrey Gregory, Marie Mason, Glea Pracht, Pam Hersh, Marilys Sears, Carol Leggett, Dorothy Andreesen, Sharon Novosad, Sharon Riskowski and Betty Dubas. Not pictured: Steven and Sara Case, Mary Sevenker, Dorothy Hruza, Darlene Tuma, Dani Hunt, Sharon Foth, Wauneta Loft, Stella Andersen, Marlyse Christensen, Ruth Campbell, Janet Melia, Jan Glendening, Sandi Jorgensen, Earlene Riley, Lucienne Sintek and Jim McAlpine.

Visit us on the web at www.valleycountyhospital.org

CEO *Larry Schrage*

Director of Marketing & Public Relations
Bethanne Kunz

Public Relations Assistant/Graphic Designer
Megan E. Lister

Housecall Quarterly is published by Valley County Health System to provide general health information. It is not intended to provide personal medical advice. Models may be used for illustrative purposes. For more information, contact Bethanne Kunz at 308-728-4347 or bkunz@valleycountyhospital.org.

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