

Staying at home

with the help of
KRHC Home Care

Marlin and Gladys Wegener live in a home where family history follows them from room to room.

Gladys was born in the well-preserved farmhouse and raised her children there, just as her grandmother did before her. When health care issues arose for Marlin, they had choices to make, including where to live. After 30 years of one health care crisis after another, Marlin and Gladys continue to stay in their beloved farmhouse with the help of KRHC home care.

"Not every home would accommodate him," Gladys said, "It's an old home."

Not every home would, but this house does. The Wegeners have made many alterations to the house to accommodate Marlin's health care needs, such as a bathroom downstairs and a ramp leading up to their front door. After 57 years of marriage they continue to enjoy regular visits from family and friends, as well as regular visits from a team of home health nurses, home care aides and a physical therapist.

The Wegeners first used home health services when Marlin had a pacemaker put in several years ago, but recent complications were the reason for this team of KRHC staff to enter their lives. Marlin was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1976; because of his MS he has not walked since 1989. MS has caused some other problems for Marlin.

"He does not have the feeling like we do. If we are in pain or getting sore from lying on one side to long we could move, but he doesn't feel anything so he doesn't shift," said KRHC home health nurse Erin Shaw.

This caused Marlin to develop pressure sores, and one sore developed into an infection that resulted in the amputation of his right foot this past May. The other abscess is on the mend. Along with wound care, Erin also gives Marlin a basic "head to toe assessment" when she visits, since Marlin also is diabetic and on coumadin.

She also discusses procedures with the Wegeners such as the emergency care plan.

"We always prefer that home health patients call us first, before going into the hospital for an emergency, so we can help coordinate their care," she said.

KRHC has a home health care nurse on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help handle the occasional emergencies that can occur. The dependability of home healthcare is something that the Wegeners enjoy very much. Other services offered by home health nurses include medication management, teaching the management of a new disease, IV therapy, and post surgical care.

Erin uses a laptop computer during her visit to access her notes and even doctor's dictations. Information she used to make a special phone call for is now available with a couple of clicks thanks to a recent transition to Electronic Health Records. Erin appreciates the ability to access notes and files from when patients were in the hospital or made a visit to the clinic. This will better prepare her to help coordi-



THE HOME CARE TEAM is essential to providing Marlin with the service and care he needs to stay in his own home. (From l. to r.): Home care aide Jamie Briggs, Gladys Wegener, Marlin Wegener and home care nurse Erin Shaw.

nate Marlin's care from his home.

"Erin has been wonderful and we are very comfortable with our decision to use community health," said Gladys,

Erin is just one member of the overall crew that helps Marlin with his health care needs.

"It's a team effort," Erin said. "We all have a certain role to play in Marlin's care through all of us working together he is able to stay safely and comfortably at home. Having family support like Marlin and Gladys have makes home healthcare an even more positive experience for the family."

Homecare aide Jamie Briggs also visits on a regular basis.

"We provide everyday services such as a sponge bath and getting patients ready for the day," said Jamie. In addition to bathing, dressing and range of motion exercises, homecare aides can provide light housekeeping services, limited laundry, grocery shopping, and food planning and preparation services.

Physical therapist Dawn Heetland is another member of the home care team. She assists with strength exercises for Marlin.

"When I first started doing this, it was real hard. Now it's easy," said Marlin, talking about using the physical therapy bands that have been attached to his bed.

"Our goal is to get him in his cart so he can get around. He wants to sit up so he can play cards again with friends of ours," said Gladys.

The compassionate care Marlin receives from KRHC home care allows him and Gladys to stay in their home, surrounded by family, memories and the rural beauty of their farm.

"We really enjoy the staff and we are thankful we could get them. I don't know what we would've done without them! It's helped my day a lot," said Gladys.

For more information on home health services call KRHC community health at 515-295-4430.

-Lindsay Harms, KRHC intern

FLU VACCINE CLINICS

Time to get your flu vaccine! Community Health at KRHC will offer the following vaccine clinics, providing you with many opportunities to get vaccinated before flu season hits. FluMist and injectable vaccine will be available at all clinics.

- **Wednesday, October 1 from 3:30 to 6 p.m.**
Algona Family YMCA
- **Wednesday, October 15 from 7 to 9 a.m.**
Algona Senior Center
- **Thursday, October 23 from 3:30 to 6 p.m. (in Bancroft)**
Bancroft EMS Room
- **Saturday, November 1 from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m.**
Algona High School (Drive through vaccine available)

FLU NEWS AND UPDATES

For flu updates and schedule changes call the KRHC Flu Info Line at 515-295-4451 or 1-800-603-8433, ext. 698; or go to the KRHC website at www.krhc.com.

Drive through vaccine at Nov. 1 clinic

Community Health at KRHC will offer a new feature at the November 1 flu vaccine clinic - drive through vaccines.

"This is our biggest flu vaccine clinic of the year and many people avoid coming to it because transportation is difficult. This is an opportunity that will make getting your vaccine easier than ever before," said community health nurse Mary Hilbert. "We are starting by only offering drive through service at our November 1 clinic, and only weather permitting."

Drive through vaccinations must have a consent form filled out **before** entering the drive through line. Forms are available at www.krhc.com. This form can be used for all vaccination clinics.

The November 1 clinic will be offered at Algona High School. Please enter through the Commons north door.

"We will have a lot of vaccine on hand and lots of staff so wait times will be short," Hilbert said. "Express lanes will be available for those that have their consent form printed off from our website and filled out before they arrive."

Share your KRHC story with us

Why are you thankful for KRHC? As Thanksgiving grows near, we at Kossuth Regional Health Center would love to hear from patients or guests that have had a positive experience with Kossuth Regional Health Center. Share your story about why you are thankful for KRHC by contacting Joanne Roepke Bode at 515-295-4581 or bodejr@mercyhealth.com. Please be aware that your comments may be used in a future Pulse newsletter article or other promotional pieces. Thanks for sharing...we would love to hear your story!

DIABETIC FALL FESTIVAL



September 30 at 5 p.m. * NIACC in Mason City
Free registration - call 641-422-4358
Speakers and mini-sessions available

NEED A RIDE?

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE AT KRHC



Many of us take our transportation for granted, but there are times when assistance with transportation is necessary due to health reasons. For those who need ride assistance in getting to medical appointments, Kossuth Regional Health center would like to help.

KRHC will provide passes for the Kossuth County Transit System for patients in need of transportation assistance in order to attend a non-emergency medical appointment, dialysis, lab, physical therapy or other health related service provided by KRHC. This would include trips to Mercy Medical Center in Mason City for medical appointments or treatment.

"We don't want anyone to miss an important appointment with the doctor because they aren't able to arrange transportation," said KRHC volunteer coordinator Shelly Harms. "For patients that have a financial need, we will provide a transit ticket that will take them from their home, safely and comfortably, to the appointment and back again."

This program is only available to people who live outside of the Algona city limits to come to KRHC. Those needing a ride within Algona to KRHC are encouraged to contact the city taxi service.

Both one-way and roundtrip transit tickets will be made available. A roundtrip ticket or two one-way passes will be needed for riders that plan to go and come back via the transit system. The transit system is open to the public. Those able to purchase a ticket can expect to pay \$3.70 for a one-way ride.

"We feel this is a valuable link between our patients and KRHC and we are committed to providing the best possible service to our patients," Harms said.

The Kossuth County Transit Service operates between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. (No service on holidays.) A 24-hour advance reservation is required, but since limited space is available it's recommended to make reservations as early as possible, up to two weeks ahead. Please call 515-924-3251 (weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. weekdays) to make your reservation. If the rider requires an assistant to help them, the assistant rides for free. Please be sure to include the assistant in your reservation so the Transit Service can allow for an extra seat.

For more information about how to obtain a transit pass through this service, contact Shelly Harms at 515-295-2451.

LEGACY BALL PLANNED FOR NOVEMBER 1

The vibrant colors of fall will soon be here bringing with it the Kossuth Regional Health Center Foundation's annual Legacy Ball on Saturday, November 1.

The Kossuth Regional Health Center Foundation began the Legacy Ball six years ago to help establish their endowment fund for KRHC. This fund is vital to the growth and maintenance of Kossuth Regional Health Center. With the ever rising costs of medical care and insurance combined with the decreasing assistance that is received from the government, it is more important than ever to have a strong endowment fund to guarantee KRHC continues to deliver the highest quality of medical care possible.

Kossuth Regional Health Center Foundation is proud of the support it receives from the businesses, schools, community organizations, and individuals throughout the area. This community effort helps the KRHC Foundation generate the money needed each year to sustain up-to-date medical equipment, provide needed materials and services to patients and continue providing high quality medical care.



Legacy Ball also offers the opportunity for the Foundation to recognize longtime donors, and engage new ones. This evening of celebration thanks them for their donation of time and money, as well as for their dedication to the Kossuth Regional Health Center Foundation and the many services provided by KRHC.

There are several ways you can get involved with Legacy Ball and the KRHC Foundation endowment fund. Plan to attend this exciting evening of dinner, dancing, and a silent auction by contacting the Foundation office for an invitation, make a donation to the 2008 Legacy Ball, or become a sponsor for the evening. All sponsors receive tickets and recognition in the Legacy Ball program.

MENU

Antipasto Trays & Assorted Crudites

Fresh Spinach Salad with Strawberry Vinaigrette, Mandarin Oranges, Blueberries & Red Onions

Caesar's Ribeye Steak Orzo Pasta & Steamed Normandy Vegetables

Tinsel Town Black Magic Cake

For ticket information or to make a donation, contact Nancy Grandgenett-Besch, KRHC Foundation Director at 515-295-4582.

Everyone at sometime in their life asks the question, "How can I make a difference?" If you have thought about this question at one time or another, consider making a donation to the KRHC Foundation endowment fund.

KRHC transition to electronic records *a success*

At the end of July, Kossuth Regional Health Center transitioned to a new electronic health record system with great success.

"We were so pleased with how things unfolded that first weekend that we made the change," said Dar Elbert, readiness coordinator for electronic health records at KRHC.

"Our staff put in a lot of time to prepare for this and their work really showed. We certainly had an adjustment to the system, but the entire process went a lot smoother than any of us could have imagined."

Now patients at KRHC will have their medical information stored in one electronic system, so everything from allergies, vital statistics, illness history, treatment records and nurse's notes are kept in one place and is readily accessible to doctors and nurses throughout Mercy Health Network – North Iowa. The EHR system puts the latest evidence-based care information at clinicians' fin-



KATHY SIMPSON, above, receives dietary instructions for patients via the new electronic health system. **RIGHT:** Pam Smith uses one of the new computers on the nursing floor.



gertips when they need it: at the time care is delivered. While many of the functions of EHR¹⁰ are "behind the scenes," patients will notice more computers in the clinical areas and

in the hospital rooms. The system isn't limited to just those areas, however. Many other departments were also included in the transition to electronic records, such as the dietary department, lab and diagnostic imaging.

Getting by with a little help from his friends

(Continued from page one)

"My legs kept going out almost by the hour. I couldn't even get in the car," he said.

He decided to make the trip to Mason City on Wednesday morning to do the MRI sooner. Darren called in some reinforcements to help him get his 6'4" frame into the car.

"I had three guys lined up to help get me loaded, but even they couldn't do it. By that morning I was pretty much dead weight," he said.

Members of the local ambulance crew came to help load Darren into the car and he was driven to Mason City. Once there, the pain was so great that he was unable to lay still for the MRI. After several attempts, he was given morphine for the pain and they tried again later that morning. To his frustration, the MRI didn't reveal anything to why Darren was experiencing such intense pain.

"They were as confused as I was. They started asking us questions about lupus, MS...it's scary when they start talking about stuff like that. I went over there just thinking I was getting an MRI done," Darren said.

Another MRI was performed and the source of the problem was finally discovered. A ruptured disk was causing problems in Darren's spinal cord.

"The spinal cord wasn't severed – the spinal cord was injured," said KRHC physical therapist Jake Jacobusse. "The blood supply had been cut off, which causes death in those cells. When that happens you don't really know the extent of the injury, not knowing how long that blood supply was cut off."

Although surgery was required immediately, Darren considered this diagnosis good news.

"I was actually encouraged," he said, to find out what was wrong.

After being rushed into surgery the day before Thanksgiving, he woke up and the doctors asked him if he could move his legs. He could not. The doctors slowly broke the news to Darren that he may never walk again.

"I was trying to process this," Darren said. "I didn't have an accident or anything...I had just been four-wheeling a week ago and now they're telling me I might not walk again."

Then a glimmer of hope appeared. After two or three days of no movement, one of the physicians noticed some muscle movement in one of Darren's legs.

"I don't think I ever accepted the fact that I was never going to walk again. I was never in that mindset. All it took was a little hope



A TEAM EFFORT BY KRHC PHYSICAL THERAPY, Mercy Medical Center and the Mayo Health System got Darren Tietz back on his feet after a ruptured disk temporarily paralyzed his legs. Seated: Lori Bode and Wendy Divis. Standing (l. to r.): Jake Jacobusse, Dede Jacobusse, Darren Tietz, Cindy Kollasch and Shane Meschke.

from them that there was a chance, and that was my goal," he said.

He spent a week at Mercy Medical Center in Mason City and then transferred to Mayo's inpatient therapy for a month and later Mayo's outpatient therapy. When that was complete, he returned to Algona to continue physical therapy at Kossuth Regional Health Center.

"One of my fears coming back was that I wouldn't get the same amount of care, but Shane and Jake are world class. I'd put them up against anybody I've come across. They were fantastic. They might not have all the toys, but what they don't have in toys they make up for in ability," Darren said.

"He came here in a wheelchair, using a walker. I didn't know

what to expect. I don't think I ever expected him to walk with a smooth gait," said Jake.

Darren began with some very basic, but challenging, strength exercises. He did resisted leg exercises, such as a straight leg raise, quad sets and hamstring curls. He also did standing balance exercises on the floor, on cushions and on one leg. Eventually he moved on to jumping exercises, increased strength training and ladder drills.

"It started off very easy, but it was still strenuous on the muscles. From there, I progressed to them trying to get me on the treadmill. They tried to get me to jump rope. Every time I got comfortable with what I was doing, they'd find something new to challenge me with," Darren said.

After getting accustomed to walking and jogging on the treadmill, Meschke brought Darren outside to run sprints in the grass.

"One of Darren's greatest attributes is that he never complained," Meschke said. "I never once heard him say, 'Why did this happen to me?' Every time we asked him to do something new, he went and did it - no complaints!"

After five months of therapy with KRHC, Darren started doing his own exercises at home. These days he can walk, bike, run, mow the lawn, and do anything he wants...almost.

"I haven't played any rugby," he said, adding that he has "retired" from that sport. "When I do certain things I can still tell that there is a little bit of weakness. But I still see improvement...it hasn't even been a year yet," he said.

For more information about KRHC physical therapy contact 515-295-4672 or www.krhc.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 25 -

KRHC to Go in Algona

Walk in wellness tests available at the Algona HyVee from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Tuesday, September 30 -

Diabetic Fall Festival

The festival will be at NIACC in Mason City from 5 to 9 p.m.

Monday, October 6 -

Childbirth Education Classes are held Monday nights from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Call Community Health to pre-register at 515-295-4430.

Saturday, November 1 -

Foundation Legacy Ball

Dinner, dancing, silent auction. Call 295-4582 for tickets or more information.

Monday, November 3 -

Breastfeeding Basics

Learn the basics of nursing your newborn at this workshop from 6:30 to 9 p.m. To pre-register call Community Health at 515-295-4430.

Medicare questions? Contact SHIIP



Dianna Moeller is a SHIIP volunteer at KRHC.

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period for Prescription Drug Plans is almost here. Between November 15 and December 31 Medicare recipients can change their Prescription Drug Plans. It is important to review your current plan to see if there will be any changes to your premium and coverage for 2009. If your current plan isn't meeting your needs, this is your opportunity to make a change to another plan. Information on changes to plans will be available on the Center for Medicare Services website (www.cms.gov) in mid-October.

You may also call 515-295-4496 to schedule an appointment with Dianna Moeller, SHIIP counselor, at Kossuth Regional Health Center for help in reviewing your plan.

VARIETY OF SPECIALITIES OFFERED AT KRHC



Save time and gas money by seeing your specialist at the KRHC specialty clinic. KRHC hosts a variety of visiting specialists including:

- **CARDIOLOGY**
- **EAR, NOSE AND THROAT**
- **NEPHROLOGY**
- **ORTHOPEDIC**
- **PODIATRY**
- **PULMONOLOGY**
- **UROLOGY**

For more information about KRHC's specialty clinic, contact Leann Engelbarts at 515-295-2451.

CONTACT KOSSUTH REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER AT:

Algona Clinic: 1519 S. Phillips, Algona 515.295.7714

Bancroft Clinic: 122 W. Ramsey, Bancroft 515.885.2336

Hospital: 1515 S. Phillips, Algona 515.295.2451 or 800.603.8433

KRHC Family Pharmacy: 1519 S. Phillips, Algona 515.295.4567

The Pulse is published by Kossuth Regional Health Center four times a year. Questions and suggestions may be submitted to:

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