



# THE COMMUNICATOR

Grant County Employee Newsletter

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## "Spring has Sprung"

Spring flowers will start springing from the earth soon if they haven't already! This is a glorious season bursting with renewed life as the trees, grass and flowers wake from their winter slumber.

Do you know there are stories behind the names of many spring flowers? I found the story of the Hyacinth intriguing so I am sharing it with you. I hope you find it as interesting as I did.

~ Dawn Mergen

## How did the Hyacinth get its name?

According to Greek mythology hyacinth got its name when a young boy named Hyacinth was killed when a discus hit him in the head during a game. A flower sprang from the cut in his head as he lay in the arms of the god Apollo, who was wailing in grief. The flower was given the name hyacinth.



<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/bulbs/history.html>

## Grant County Social Services ~ Submitted by Jon Angeli, Director of Social Services

The Department of Social Services operates in five major areas: Long Term Support Services, Economic Support and Work Programs, Juvenile Delinquency, Child Protective Services, and Prevention/Early Intervention Services.

The Department provides over two million dollars in home care services for frail elderly and disabled people. The focus is to assist families and community in supporting these people with services that permits them to stay in their own home rather than a nursing home or some other institution.

Eligibility for Economic Support services is determined by the Department Staff for Medical Assistance, Food Stamps, Child-care, Fuel Assistance, and Work Programs. The Work Programs include em-

ployment services for W-2, Food Stamps, and Custodial Parents.

Juvenile Court Intake receives delinquency referrals from law enforcement and then makes recommendations to the District Attorney and courts for appropriate action. When children are formally and informally found in need of services the Department Staff provides those services such as enforcing rules of behavior, coordinating other support services, providing direct counseling to the children and their families or contracting for other organizations to provide more intense services.

Child Protective Services include assessing reports of child abuse or neglect, making a determination if abuse and neglect occurred. The Department requests the District Attor-

ney and court to take action, if necessary to keep children safe. The Department delivers a broad array of services to assist the family in keeping children safe and in their own homes; but we also have out of home placements if necessary.

The critical role the Department performs is prevention and early intervention to delay the elderly in becoming frail, to support employment as an alternative to Economic Support, and support families to reduce the incidence of delinquency, abuse or neglect of children. This is often the most cost effective way to deal with these situations that effect all of us.

## ER? Acute Care? Urgent Care? ~ Submitted by Dawn Mergen, Personnel Specialist

**Office Visit Care** should be used whenever possible as it is least expensive.

**Acute Care, Urgent Care, Walk-In Care and Convenient Care** centers are available for non-emergency care that you need when your doctor's office is closed. Some examples of non-emergency care are broken bones, sprains, minor cuts and burns, drug reactions, and non-severe bleeding.

**Emergency Room Care** is care you need due to the onset of a medical condition that, if you did not seek medical attention, could result in your death or serious injury. Some examples of emergency care are heart attacks, strokes, severe shortness of breath, and significant blood loss. Plan hospitals should be used whenever possible when seeking emergency room care.

(Sources — Medical Associates HMO and Dean Health Plan documents)

### Local Urgent Care Locations

#### Both Medical Associates & Dean Health Plan Providers:

•LANCASTER: Grant Regional Health Center, Walk-In Care, 507 S. Monroe St. 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Mon. thru Fri.; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sat. & Sun. (608-723-2143)

•PLATTEVILLE: Southwest Health Center, Urgent Care, 250 Camp Street 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. Mon. thru Fri.; Noon to 10 p.m. Sat.; 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sun. & Holidays (608-348-2331)

•DUBUQUE: Finley, Convenient Care, 350 N. Grandview 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Mon. thru Fri.; 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sat. & Sun. (563-583-2273)

•24 HOUR HELP NURSE: Nurses are available to you by telephone to assist in accessing the medical information you need. Medical Associates 1-800-325-7442. Dean Health Plan 1-800-576-8773. You may call about any health concern, anytime, day or night.

#### Additional Medical Associates Provider:

•DUBUQUE: Medical Associates Clinic, Acute Care, 1000 Langworthy 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mon. thru Fri.; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sat. & Sun. (563-584-3455 or 1-800-325-7442)

*A complete list of Urgent Care centers can be found in your Health Insurance carrier's Provider Directory or by contacting your carrier by telephone.*

## HEALTH INSURANCE TASK FORCE

By now many of you have heard about the health insurance task force that was created to address the ever increasing health insurance premium issue. The task force consists of the following people. Nathan Dreckman, Mary Allen, Mike Nugent, Phyllis Fuerstenberg, Joyce Roling, Sharon Reed and Chris Carl. This task force has been meeting once per month since November. Here are some things that's being discussed:

▪ Listed ideas on how to reduce premium costs.

▪ Met with Medical Associates HMO and Dean Health Plan to discuss claims experience and plan design.

▪ Discussed the State Health Insurance plan with Arlene Larson.

▪ Medical Associates and Dean Health Plan will be sending each member a summary of medical and prescription drugs costs for the year 2003.

The task force is currently evaluating all the information gathered and are welcoming any suggestions or ideas from employees.

Please contact any of the above people for more information or suggestions!

*\*FYI.....*

*Average cost per generic prescription: \$17.49*

*Average cost per brand-name prescription: \$71.35*

*Average annual prescription cost per subscriber: \$1,010.70*

*Average cost per office visit in network: \$101.92*

*Average cost per emergency visit in network: \$382.74*

*\*Dean Health Plan*



## SECONDHAND SMOKE AND YOU ~ Submitted by Kathy Marty, Tobacco-Free Coalition Coordinator

**What is secondhand smoke?** It has two sources.....smoke from a burning cigarette, also known as side stream smoke, and smoke exhaled from a person's mouth.

**What is in tobacco smoke?** There are at least 50 carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) in tobacco smoke, which include carbon monoxide, ammonia, acetone (fingernail polish remover), arsenic, cyanide, methane (swamp gas), tar, formaldehyde, nicotine (used in insecticide), and toluene (industrial solvent).

**Is secondhand smoke that dangerous?** Scientific studies estimate that secondhand smoke accounts for nearly 3,000 lung cancer deaths, and as many as 62,000 deaths from coronary heart disease annually among adult nonsmokers in the United States. In Wisconsin, secondhand smoke is estimated to annually cause as many as 1,200 lung cancer and heart disease deaths. Secondhand smoke also increases the risk of a range of illnesses, particularly among children, including asthma, bronchitis, ear infections, pneumonia, and other respiratory illnesses. In addition, substantial evidence now indicates that secondhand smoke is associated with low birth weight and SIDS or sudden infant death syndrome. As such, secondhand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

### What is the story in Grant County?

According to *The Burden of Tobacco in Grant County* (April 2002), about 15% of all deaths in Grant County each year are attributable to smoking. Although secondhand smoke is not specifically broken out in this latter report, it is clear that cigarette smoking causes 83% of all lung cancer deaths and 14% of all deaths from heart disease in Grant County each year. This, in turn, means that approximately 870 years are lost annually from the potential lifespan of those that die from smoking.

### Secondhand smoke does equal cigarette smoking.

A nonsmoker who spends two hours in a smoky bar will have an exposure equivalent to smoking 4 cigarettes. Two hours in a nonsmoking section of a restaurant that allows smoking in other sections equals smoking one and a half cigarettes. Twenty-four hours living with a pack-a-day smoker means that you essentially smoke 3 cigarettes every day although you never light up yourself. In fact, as little as a half hour of secondhand exposure causes heart damage to that of habitual smokers.

### **Does a nonsmoking section in restaurants effectively filter out secondhand smoke?**

No. Restaurants cannot stop secondhand smoke from wafting over from the smoker's section into the nonsmoking section. It is just not possible. This is the reason two hours in a nonsmoking section of a restaurant equals smoking one and a half cigarettes.

### What does work to eliminate secondhand smoke?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) indicates that the only two methods by which nonsmokers can be protected are by complete elimination of smoking in the building and establishment of separate, enclosed smoking areas that are separately ventilated and directly exhausted to the outside. In fact, smokers are also more at-risk in an enclosed area as well, particularly if it is small, and there is no outside ventilation. Existing ventilation systems (especially without outside ventilation) fail to remove all of the dangerous toxins found in secondhand smoke.

The Tobacco-Free Coalition is consulting with the Board of Health and the County Personnel Department to review the County Smoke-Free policy. In addition, these partners are trying to explore ideas to promote wellness for all county employees. Current ideas that relate to the wellness program include clearly spelling out health benefits currently available to assist in quitting smoking and a cessation support group.

For further information to assist in quitting smoking, you may contact Kathy Marty, Tobacco-Free Coalition Coordinator, at the Grant County Health Department 723-6416.

*Statistical sources available upon request by contacting Kathy Marty at 723-6416.*