

ACCESS for ALL

InHealth Community Wellness Clinic Provides Free Health Care to Qualified Residents of Grant and Crawford Counties

There's this thing about Robin Tranzo. When she sees a problem, she gets angry. When she gets angry, she takes action. When she takes action, she inspires others to join her. And when people join together to tackle a problem, they're more apt to find solutions.

That's how the InHealth Community Wellness Clinic in Boscobel got started. This free clinic began as an idea of Tranzo's, borne of her anger that so many people are forced to do without the most basic health care due to financial limitations or lack of insurance. The idea became a reality, with the clinic opening its doors to the public in October 2007, because so many people worked together to make it happen.

Thanks to countless hours given freely by area health professionals, social services personnel, and others, as well as generous donations of equipment and cash from area medical establishments, organizations, and individuals, the InHealth Community Wellness Clinic is now providing a wide range of basic health care free of charge to qualified residents of Grant and Crawford

counties. Among those organizations providing financial assistance to the new clinic is Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative, which recently presented a check to the clinic through the co-op's Operation RoundUp program (see sidebar on page 28).

Access for Everybody

The clinic is for residents of Grant and Crawford counties, but no one is turned away.

"Even if we find that a patient doesn't qualify, we don't turn them away without having them see a doctor first," Tranzo said. "And we will help patients find services if they don't qualify for treatment here. We can help them find services like BadgerCare, WIC, or affordable health care."

"We don't take patients away from any of the other clinics," pointed out Dr. Jim Heersma, a retired doctor from the Muscoda area who now volunteers his time as the clinic's pharmacy assistant. "What we're aiming for are those who are above Medicaid and BadgerCare, but

SREC recently presented the InHealth Wellness Community Clinic with a check through the co-op's Operation RoundUp program. Left to right are Pam Stuckey, CMA, clinic coordinator; Dr. Ravikant Maski, one of the medical professionals who regularly volunteers at the clinic; Robin Tranzo, clinic executive director; Megan Graney, SREC communications director; and Dr. Jim Heersma, clinic pharmacy assistant.





Dr. Jim Heersma is the clinic's pharmacy assistant. He works with Michelle Farrell of Bohlman's Pharmacy in Boscobel, who oversees the pharmacy. Farrell obtains necessary medicines at cost from Bohlman's Pharmacy. Some medicines are also contributed by area clinics and hospitals.

they're just underinsured or not insured at all, and it gets to that point where they have to decide to pay for fuel, food, or health care."

Equipped with Donations

The InHealth Community Wellness Clinic is located in the lower level of the Associated Balance and Hearing Clinic in downtown Boscobel. Patients enter a cheery facility where they are ushered first to a screening room. Here, the patient's eligibility is determined and screeners help guide the patients to other available services, if applicable. Patients are then led to one of two exam rooms, both fully equipped with medical equipment donated by area clinics and hospitals.

"Maski Clinic in Platteville was just incredible," Tranzo said. "They donated about \$10,000 worth of equipment, including the scales, the lights, and the EKG machine. Maski Clinic also donated a lot of our medicines; they stocked us right up."

Other donations came from Grant Regional Health Center; Mercy Hospital in Dubuque, which gave the clinic two expensive digital scanning thermometers; and Southwest Health Center of Platteville. Computers were donated by Southwest Technical Institute, and office furniture and decorations were donated by various individuals. Some supplies were also donated by Upland Hills in Dodgeville.

Other medical establishments, most notably Boscobel Area Health Care, have also helped by donating services that the clinic is not equipped to offer, such as X-rays or lab work. In fact, Tranzo is usually able to tap into her network of generous supporters in the medical field to

meet most any urgent need that a patient of the free clinic may have.

"If I can just think on a problem for about 24 hours, I can usually find a way for people to get their surgery free," she said.

Staffed by Volunteers

The on-site medical care is also donated by area doctors and nurses who rotate shifts at the clinic during its office hours on Saturdays and Monday evenings. Among those volunteers are Dr. Meena Maski and Dr. Ravikant Maski of Maski Clinic in Platteville. One of the Maskis has been at the clinic every Saturday since it's been open.

The Maskis are not alone in their commitment. Others who volunteer regularly are Dr. Scott Walker from the Bluff Street Clinic in Boscobel, who serves as the clinic's medical director; nurse practitioners Rita Walker and Terri Payne of the Boscobel Clinic; and Dr. Larry Sanchez of Dean Medical Clinic in Lancaster. The clinic is also grateful for emergency services provided by Dr. William Fast of Boscobel Clinic.

All the doctors and nurses who work shifts at the clinic do so after putting in full days of work at their own practices. Many of them drive long distances to volunteer up to three hours at a time, week after week.

"Robin has put together a good team," Dr. Ravikant Maski said. "Everybody has contributed a lot, but Robin's the driving force behind this. And let's not forget her husband. He has given up the income he could get with this space. We could not do this without him."

Anger to Action

Tranzo's husband, Poul-Erik Tranzo, is the audiologist who owns and operates the Associated Balance and Hearing Clinic, in which the InHealth Community Wellness Clinic is housed. Tranzo credits her husband for helping direct her anger into the action that eventually resulted in the free clinic.

Tranzo has some experience in the medical field herself. She worked as a dental assistant for a couple of years and also served on Boscobel's rescue squad, but she spent most of her career — 21 years, in fact — as an art teacher. As such, she enjoyed good insurance benefits, and that, combined with her husband's successful practice, meant health care was never a worry for her.

After retiring from teaching, she worked with her husband at the hearing clinic where her eyes were opened to how others struggle to get their family's most basic health-care needs met.

(Continued on page 28 ►)

InHealth Community Clinic

(Continued from page 5)

“I got used to having the health insurance, but then I came here and started hearing the stories — that some women don’t even get their pap smears because they can’t afford it,” she said. “I started doing the research and finding out how many people in Grant and Crawford counties live in poverty, and I got angry.

“But the only way to deal with being angry is to do something about it,” she added. Her husband offered her the use of Associated Balance and Hearing’s lower level for a free clinic, and Tranzo spent the next six months obtaining state and federal nonprofit status, rounding up volunteers and donations, and asking churches and organizations for support.

About 50 individuals now donate their time to the clinic, either as health-care professionals, social-services professionals, or clerical and cleaning staff. Robin noted that some of the janitorial work at the clinic is provided by patients who wanted to give something back in gratitude of the free treatment they received.

Next Goal: Dental

Tranzo is currently focusing her efforts on establishing a dental practice as part of the clinic. Aware that dental insurance can be even harder to obtain than medical insurance, Tranzo said she’s always hoped to include dental as part of the free clinic, but setting up a dental practice requires a lot of expensive equipment that the clinic simply hasn’t had yet.

However, that’s likely to change for 2008. In January, the clinic received a pledge from the Ray and Kay Eckstein Foundation of Cassville for \$25,000 to open a dental practice if the clinic can match the funds. Tranzo is confident the clinic will be able to raise the funds, plus secure services of a few area dentists and hygienists who are willing to donate a few hours a month. “The goal is to raise this money in four months,” she said.

No one who’s been part of the free clinic’s creation would doubt Tranzo on that call. She’s shown that when people take action and work together, wonderful things can happen.—*Mary Erickson* ■

The InHealth Wellness Community Clinic is open on the first and third Mondays of the month from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. and the first and third Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to noon. As needs grow, so may the hours. Donations are greatly appreciated and can be sent to InHealth Community Wellness Clinic, 109 East Bluff St., Boscobel, WI 53805. For more information, call (608) 375-4328 or (608) 485-1498 or e-mail pertranzo@mchsi.com.



Generous donations of furniture and supplies helped create the brightly, cheery atmosphere in the clinic.

What is Operation RoundUp?

Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative members who participate in the co-op’s Operation RoundUp program were among the many contributors who helped make the InHealth Community Wellness Clinic a reality.

Operation RoundUp is a voluntary program where a member’s electric bill is rounded up to the nearest dollar each month, with the difference placed in a special fund used to help worthwhile community organizations and programs that all members benefit from. In addition, some funds may be allocated to local individuals facing extreme situations, such as a family with exceptional medical costs or a family that lost its home in a fire.

Individual member contributions to Operation RoundUp average just \$6 a year. That may not sound like much, but when one member’s \$6 is combined with that of thousands of others, the resulting total is enough to provide significant help to a lot of worthy causes.

Past Operation RoundUp funds have been allocated to, among others, area food pantries, community fire departments and emergency response crews, and Relay for Life and other fundraising or service organizations.

If you’re already participating in Operation RoundUp — we thank you! If you’re not yet involved but would like to sign up, please contact SREC at any of the three offices. ■

Keep Your Family Safe with GFCIs

Have you ever experienced an electric shock? If you did, it's probably because your hand or some other part of your body contacted a source of electrical current and your body provided a path for the electrical current to go to the ground.

An unintentional electric path between a source of current and a grounded surface is referred to as a ground-fault. These occur when current is leaking somewhere, and electricity is escaping to the ground. If your body happens to provide the path to the ground for this leakage, you could be injured, burned, severely shocked, or even electrocuted.

A simple, inexpensive device can prevent these types of dangers. A ground fault circuit interruptor (GFCI) monitors electricity flowing in a circuit. If the current flowing through the circuit differs by a small amount from that returning, the GFCI quickly switches off power to that circuit, interrupting power faster than a blink of an eye to prevent a lethal dose of electricity.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, properly installed GFCIs could prevent over two-thirds of the approximately 300 electrocutions still occurring each year in and around the home. Installation of the device could also prevent thousands of burn and electric shock injuries each year.

Three common types of ground fault circuit interrupters are available for home use:

RECEPTACLE — This type of GFCI is used in place of the standard duplex receptacle found throughout the house. It fits into the standard outlet box and protects you against ground faults whenever an electrical product is plugged into the outlet.

CIRCUIT BREAKER — In homes equipped with circuit breakers rather than fuses, a circuit breaker GFCI may be installed in a panel box to give protection to selected circuits. The circuit breaker GFCI serves a dual purpose — not only will it shut off electricity in the event of a ground-fault, but it will also trip when a short circuit or an overload occurs.



PORTABLE — Where permanent GFCIs are not practical, portable GFCIs may be used. One type of portable GFCI contains the GFCI circuitry in a plastic enclosure with plug blades in the back and receptacle slots in the front. It can be plugged into a receptacle, and then the electrical product is plugged into the GFCI.

Another type of portable GFCI is an extension cord combined with a GFCI.

In homes built to comply with the National Electrical Code, GFCI protection is required for most outdoor receptacles, bathroom receptacle circuits, garage wall outlets, kitchen receptacles, and all receptacles in crawl spaces and unfinished basements.

Owners of homes that do not have GFCIs installed in all those critical areas should consider having them installed. A GFCI should also be used wherever electrically powered garden equipment (mower, hedge trimmer, edger, etc.) are operated.—*Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission* ■



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231 N. Sheridan St. Lancaster, WI 53813 (608) 723-2121 800-236-2141 lancaster@srec.net	427 Main St. P.O. Box 127 Darlington, WI 53530 (608) 776-4415 800-236-6656 darlington@srec.net	303 Main St. Hwy. 171 P.O. Box 158 Gays Mills, WI 54631 (608) 735-4313 888-735-4314 gaysmills@srec.net
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