Local spiritual leaders breathe life into Hospital Chaplain Program

Local spiritual leaders take week-long shifts to volunteer as hospital chaplains at Lake Chelan Community Hospital. Pictured: L-R: Kyle Plew, Kurt Toolson, Del Sherman, Keith Rife, Father Ricardo Villarreal, Louis Claassen, Frank Needles, Don Forbusch, Scott Raab, Gordon Hyde.

When volunteer chaplain Kyle Plew left Lake Chelan’s hospital after midnight, he knew he wouldn’t sleep that night. He had spent the last several hours with people who had been in a serious vehicle accident. Multiple patients were in the emergency room, and others from the accident were in the hospital waiting area, dealing with the trauma.

“I feel very blessed to have been able to help these people,” said Plew. “While the medical staff was busy saving lives, I was able to serve as a liason and give support.”

That was exactly what Dr. John Kremer, LCCH Chief Medical Officer, and hospital staff envisioned when they recently resurrected the hospital’s chaplain program. During trauma, while medical staff focus on the patient, a chaplain can make a significant difference to friends and family by providing comfort, contacting their clergy or relaying information.

Providing patients and their families spiritual well being is an important part of patient-centered care, said Augustin Benegas, LCCH Planetree Coordinator. When Benegas contacted local clergy about the program, he was thrilled with the positive responses. More than 10 church leaders now volunteer as hospital chaplains. If you are at the hospital and would like to visit with a chaplain, please ask a nurse. The hospital chaplain can also contact your own church leader, if you wish.

Lake Chelan hospital one of nation’s “Most Wired”

Lake Chelan's hospital was recognized as one of the nation's MOST WIRED—SMALL AND RURAL hospitals, according to results of the 2010 Most Wired Survey released in the July issue of Hospitals & Health Networks magazine, the journal of the American Hospital Association.

Making the Most Wired list translates into higher quality care, improved patient safety and operational efficiency, said hospital CEO Kevin Abel. The hospital has adopted “wired” technology, including TelePharmacy, TeleRadiology and TeleStoke. Implementing electronic medical records and computerized physician order entry also contributed to the recognition.

“Being named a Most Wired Hospital is truly our Tour de France in healthcare technology,” said Ross Hurd, LCCH Chief Information Officer. “As a small independent hospital, we’re leading the curve in technology, while remaining in the black.”
Once you work in health care, even at the financial end, you can’t imagine anything else,” said Viola Babcock, new hospital Chief Financial Officer. “There’s a passion in it that’s hard to find elsewhere.”

Babcock has 20 years of accounting experience, including more than three years in health care for Critical Access hospitals. Additional experience includes 14 years of corporate accounting with an emphasis on internal audit, mergers/acquisitions and revenue, as well as five years in public fund accounting, three of those in health care.

She takes her job seriously. “As a hospital, we can provide stellar patient care, but if we are unable to create financial stability we put all that care, compassion and hard work at risk,” she said.

New chief financial officer brings experience, passion to job

Retired Judge Tom Warren new Commissioner

Retired Judge Thomas C. Warren was appointed a Lake Chelan Community Hospital Commissioner at the hospital’s regular board meeting in June. Warren replaces Mary Pat Scofield, who resigned in April for personal reasons. “I am honored to be appointed Commissioner,” said Warren, “not to fill Mary Pat Scofield’s shoes, but to carry on with her vision and compassion for the mission of the hospital.”

Warren, who moved to Chelan four years ago, will serve as Commissioner until June 2011, when he will be up for reelection for the remainder of Scofield’s term, which ends in 2015.

Warren served on the Chelan County District Court in Wenatchee from 1986 to 2007 and has a long history of commitment to community service. He is currently on the Board of Directors of the North Central Washington Rural Health Foundation, immediate past-president of LCCH Foundation, member of the Chelan City Planning Commission and President of Chelan Rotary Club.

Warren’s past community activities include president of the Wenatchee Chamber of Commerce, director-general of the Washington State Apple Blossom Festival, president of United Way of Washington and chairman of Board of Trustees of Wenatchee Valley College. He has served as chair of the staff-parish relations and marketing committees of the Wenatchee First United Methodist Church, chair of the Mustard Seed Neighborhood Childcare Center for low-income families, and vice-chair of the Good Grief Center Board, providing grief services to children and adults.

“The future of health care in the Lake Chelan Valley is going to be a big job,” said Warren, “considering the changing technology of health care, new health care legislation and the needs of our current facility. I am ready to face these challenges.”

Most wired continued

TeleMedicine strengthens LCCH’s ties to larger facilities and makes it easier for local family doctors to collaborate with a larger network of providers. We are connected electronically to Wenatchee hospitals, as well as Harborview, UW Medical Center, Virginia Mason, Swedish, Seattle Children’s, Sacred Heart and Deaconess Medical Center.

“We have incredible specialists in our region and across the state,” said Hurd. “They can’t all come to us, but we can put state-of-the-art equipment in our facility and route information straight to them, meaning patients can potentially stay close to home for more of their medical care.”

In addition, connections to other facilities keep local providers up-to-date on medical advances. Partnerships bring crucial continuing education courses to Lake Chelan physicians and providers.

“I am honored our hospital was named one of the year’s Most Wired Hospitals,” said Abel, who attributes the honor to hard work of CIO Hurd, Mike Collins, Information Technology manager, and the hospital clinical team. “This is a critical milestone as we strive to meet Federal information technology requirements by 2011, but, most important, these efforts help us deliver the best care to our community.”
Kerry Stewart, RN, Trauma/Emergency Room Coordinator and charge nurse, was recently honored as Distinguished Employee of the Quarter. She is pictured in the newly decorated pediatric ER exam room, which has a jungle theme. Stewart plays a major role at LCCH and has contributed to improved quality of care at the hospital, most recently helping implement the Telestroke partnership with Swedish Medical Center.

From the Administrator, Kevin Abel
Rural hospitals in communities across the state strive to ensure patients receive the right care at the right time. In recognition of this work, the Rural Healthcare Quality Network, an affiliate of the WA State Hospital Association, distributes awards in nine categories for hospitals meeting or exceeding the organization’s Quality Initiatives. Awards were presented during the June WA State Hospital Association Rural Health meeting. I am proud to say LCCH won awards in five clinical categories, including obstetrics, quality of care data reporting, surgery and cardiac care. We were also awarded Superstar Status in providing care to heart failure patients.

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Paramedic Ray Eickmeyer recently attended the Resuscitation Academy, where EMS leaders from around the world come to Seattle/King county to learn secrets of the region’s survival rates. Eickmeyer is a member of the state’s Cardiac & Stroke Technical Advisory committee and Stroke Council.

Saturday, September 18
11 AM to 5 PM
Tickets are $20 a person (tax deductible)
Buy tickets in Chelan at Culinary Apple & Chamber of Commerce and in Manson at Allisons
Featuring Northwest Art Sale at Tsillan Cellars (no ticket necessary)
Proceeds will purchase a Rotary Vane Medical Vacuum System for Lake Chelan Community Hospital
For more information, call 1-800-4CHELAN or (509) 682-0500
Thank you guild B!

Baby hearing screening improvements earn LCCH Hospital of the Quarter

Thanks to a donation by Guild E, your community hospital is being featured as the Hospital of the Quarter in Newborn Hearing News, published by Seattle Children’s Hospital, as part of the Washington Early Hearing-loss Detection, Diagnosis and Intervention (EHDDI) program.

The article describes the improvement LCCH has made in regard to its newborn hearing screening program. In the past, aging equipment often gave false readings. New screening equipment, donated in part by Guild E (thank you!), additional training and coordination by Marie Richerson, OB coordinator, have turned the local baby hearing screening program into a high quality service.

“The results from [Richerson’s] efforts have been striking,” said the article. Congratulations to Richerson and the OB nursing team!
by Dr. Tobe Harberd
With summer in full swing, it is important to be aware of dangers associated with extreme heat exposure. Millions of people in the US are affected each year. Athletes, elderly, children and outdoor laborers are most vulnerable.

What is it? Heat related illness includes heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Heat exhaustion is more common and less extreme, occurring when body temperatures are between normal and 104 F. Symptoms include thirst, nausea, dizziness, weakness, headache and fatigue. Heatstroke is more severe and occurs at body temperatures over 104 F. It includes previous symptoms, as well as confusion, seizures and coma. It is a medical emergency. Untreated, it can be fatal.

Are you at risk? Individuals with pre-existing dehydration, uncontrolled high blood pressure, thyroid problems, diabetes, recent infection and fatigue, as well as the very young or old, are more likely to be affected. Certain medications may also increase the risk, including those for heart disease, allergies and seizures. Diuretics, caffeine and alcohol can cause dehydration and increase risk of exposure.

What do to? Treatment for heat exhaustion starts with getting out of the heat quickly. Individuals should rest in a cool, shady place and drink plenty of water. If symptoms do not improve over 30 minutes, see a health care provider.

Individuals who develop heatstroke need immediate care. Contact a medical provider immediately. Move the person to a cool, shady place and start hydrating. Remove unnecessary clothing and spray or bathe skin with cool water. Once a person has heatstroke or heat exhaustion, they will be vulnerable to hot conditions for about one week after. It is important to avoid strenuous exercise, dehydration, and hot weather.

University of Washington students to study medicine at Chelan
Select University of Washington (UW) medical students will come to Lake Chelan as part of the school’s WRITE Program, a 20-week rural clinical medical training experience for third-year medical students.

Lake Chelan Clinic has been selected as a WRITE site, with Dr. Martin Clements as the primary preceptor. Psychiatric teaching will also be offered through Lake Chelan Community Hospital’s residential treatment facility. The WRITE program was developed as a means to help meet the need for rural primary care physicians, especially in the pacific northwest.

How do I prevent it? If you are going to be in the heat, you need to maintain adequate hydration, wear light, loose fitting clothing and monitor your exertion level. It is best to exercise in the early morning or late evening. Allow yourself a week to acclimatize to new environments before exerting in the heat. Prior to outdoor activities, you may also check the Heat Index chart by the National Weather Service.