

# CONNECTIONS

IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF OUR REGIONAL COMMUNITY



June 2020

## Hospital, community come together for COVID-19

These unparalleled times with COVID-19 have brought Salina Regional Health Center and the community together in ways no one could have ever imagined only months ago. Despite society's moves toward reopening, the impact of the pandemic is still plain to see.

Concerns about shortages of medical supplies such as masks, face shields and cleaning solutions have been met with overwhelming donations from area individuals and businesses who stepped up to provide their talent to specially make items or share from their own stock of supplies. Gifts of food, snacks and encouraging messages were made to keep healthcare worker spirits high.

A \$25,000 grant from the Earl Bane Foundation and a donation from the Shelter Insurance Foundation were utilized to convert 16 patient rooms in the hospital to become specialized units for COVID-19 patients. These rooms were equipped with negative pressure ventilation systems and other modifications required to care for patients with COVID-19 of all ages.

Various restrictions on access to the hospital and clinics have been utilized, including screening all who enter the facilities for COVID-19 risk. These measures are aimed at keeping patients, staff and visitors safe. Special procedures are utilized for patients with possible COVID-19 symptoms and extra cleaning and precautions are taken throughout all facilities to create a safe environment.

"The stay-at-home orders, social distancing measures and all of the things that have been put in place have helped flatten the curve and slow the spread of the virus," said Rob Freelove, senior vice president/chief medical officer at Salina Regional. "This allowed our hospital, and other hospitals, to better prepare for a surge of patients, which could still come later this year. COVID-19 isn't going away. Hopefully everybody understands the importance of good hand hygiene, not touching your face and social distancing. We're in this together."



ABOVE: A sign along Santa Fe Avenue recognizes the efforts of healthcare workers in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. LEFT: Emergency department physician Braeden Johnson, and nurse Lori Golbek demonstrate some of the personal protective equipment used to care for COVID-19 patients.

## Foundation grant supports new technology for stroke care

Stroke is a leading cause of long term disability in the United States.

For every minute that passes after blood flow is blocked by a clot in the brain, millions of cells are destroyed, which can cause loss of memory, speech, movement and other catastrophic health outcomes.

Clot busting drugs can be used to treat blockages from an ischemic stroke. One form of treatment, available at Salina Regional Health Center, delivers the drugs intravenously if specific criteria are met. Another form of treatment, called an endovascular thrombectomy, uses a catheter threaded through the blood vessels to physically remove the clot from where it resides in the brain under image guidance. Endovascular thrombectomy is available at hospitals offering a higher level of stroke care.

In order to fully evaluate which form of treatment should be pursued, a CT scan is needed using advanced brain perfusion software to determine the severity of the stroke and whether the affected brain tissue is salvageable. The closest hospital with this advanced CT brain perfusion technology is in Wichita. Stroke patients from this area have had to be transferred just to receive an evaluation to see if they were candidates for endovascular thrombectomy. Some patients endured the trip just to find out they weren't candidates for the procedure.

A \$56,250 grant from the Salina Regional Health Foundation is allowing the purchase of this specialized CT brain perfusion software to be added to Salina Regional's CT technology, which will allow stroke patients to be fully evaluated here. Salina Regional's growing stroke program was activated 426 times last year to care for patients from around the region who had suffered a possible stroke.

If patients are candidates for an endovascular thrombectomy, they'll be transferred to a facility where the intervention can be performed.

"This saves families a lot of unnecessary travel and allows us to better share the decision making that takes place with higher-level-of-care facilities," said Terry Hauschel, vice president of operations at Salina Regional. "There's also currently no reimbursement offered for using this technology, but we know having this data can make a substantial difference in outcomes for patients."

## *Employee campaign raises support for Foundation programs*

The annual Salina Regional Health Center employee campaign to support programs and services of the Salina Regional Health Foundation raised \$33,639 this year. Employees who chose to give had the option to support the campaign through payroll deductions or outright gifts.

The unrestricted gifts will be used to support the



Special brain perfusion software is being added to CT technology at Salina Regional Health Center to better evaluate stroke patients thanks to a \$56,250 grant from the Foundation.

many programs of the Foundation, which benefit patients, families and employees themselves.

"Employees give of themselves on a daily basis serving the medical needs of people in our community and region, so this support is really special," said Tom Martin, executive director of the Foundation.

## Grant supports new way of bathing newborns at SRHC

A newborn's first bath seems like it would be a routine part of care following delivery. However, the experience has actually been shown to be a source of stress that potentially can even carry health consequences.

Until recently babies were undressed and given a sponge bath on the mother's bed or on a counter in the mother's room. This practice was shown to cause a newborn's body temperature to drop and the experience of being naked and unswaddled often caused the baby to cry throughout the procedure.

A new practice of swaddled immersion bathing has been implemented at Salina Regional Health Center to alleviate these concerns with support from the Salina Regional Health Foundation. The \$5,235 grant purchased specialized tubs with disposable liners and stainless steel carts to bring the service to the patients' rooms. Now babies remain swaddled during their first bath and their arms and legs are carefully washed one at a time for bathing. The tubs have a built-in temperature indicator to ensure that the water temperature is not too hot or too cold.

"Loss of body temperature and stress causes a baby to burn unnecessary calories, which can make it harder for a baby to gain weight after delivery," said



A \$5,235 grant from the Foundation has helped implement a new form of swaddled immersion bathing for newborns at the hospital.

Melinda Schmidt, Women and Infants Services director at Salina Regional Health Center. "Research has indicated this method of bathing increases safety and comfort for newborns."

## CHIP grant supports St. Francis telehealth initiative

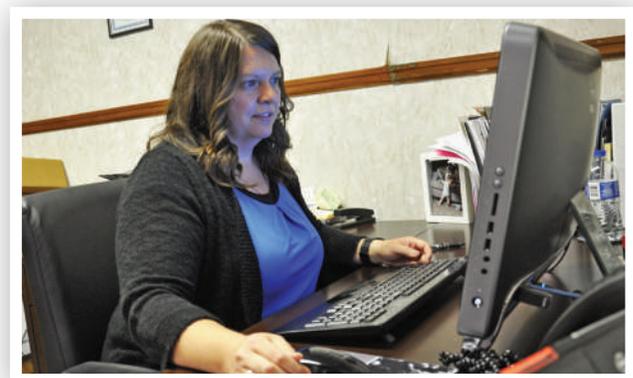
During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic this spring, healthcare providers increasingly turned to using telemedicine when possible to lessen in-person contact in order to alleviate fears for spreading the virus.

Through the use of a smart phone, tablet or computer with video and sound capabilities over the internet, providers could offer a number of services virtually.

A \$15,000 Community Health Investment Program (CHIP) grant to Saint Francis Community and Residential Services helped the organization purchase telemedicine technology necessary to maintain contact with children and families under their care during the pandemic.

Saint Francis provides behavioral health and counseling services to children in foster care and parents working on making changes in their life that will allow them to reunify their family.

"This technology is helping us extend our services to clients in the Salina area," said Darrin Sewell, executive director for outpatient behavioral health at Saint Francis Ministries. "We want to meet our clients where they are, and the response from using this technology has been very well received."



Amber Holter, addiction therapist and manager at Saint Francis Ministries, uses telemedicine technology to treat clients thanks to a CHIP grant.

Salina Regional Health Center  
400 S. Santa Fe Ave. • P.O. Box 5080  
Salina, KS 67402-5080 • (785) 452-7000

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## Director's Message

At one point with the COVID-19 pandemic, Salina Regional implemented a no visitors policy. Those of us who work at the hospital had been asked to volunteer for shifts at the main entrance to screen visitors and enforce these protective measures.

My shift was a Sunday morning. It involved a very brief encounter, but one I will not soon forget. A woman I know from church, and deeply respect, entered with her mask on. She was as surprised to see me, in mask and gloves, as I was to see her. On any other “normal” Sunday morning she and her husband would have been sitting in a pew, but a few feet from me.

On this particular morning, her husband was a patient in our hospital. She wasn't asking to see him. Knowing the restrictions, she wouldn't do that. She handed me a clear, small handbag containing a few personal items that she asked to be delivered to his room. In the hand-off to me, her handwritten note to her husband was clearly visible through the transparent bag. It said, “I love you.”

We know that these are challenging times for our patients and their families. Rest assured that we are committed to caring for, and serving, you and your loved ones.

CONNECTIONS is published every other month by the Salina Regional Health Foundation. If you no longer wish to receive fund-raising contacts or materials, please notify: Privacy Office, Salina Regional Health Center, Health Information Management, P.O. Box 5080, Salina, KS 67402-5080/ Phone: (785) 452-7313/Fax (785) 452-7312/E-mail:Privacy@srhc.com.



**Tom Martin**  
Executive Director