



Heart to Heart

NEWS FROM ST. LUKE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

FRONT LINE RESPONSE

St. Luke evolves emergency room protocols amid COVID-19

IN A FEW SHORT WEEKS St. Luke’s emergency room layout and procedures have undergone a serious re-structuring, in response to the novel coronavirus’ arrival in the area.

Stephanie Reffner, the new director of the emergency room, has been busy preparing the hospital’s emergency response to treat people diagnosed with COVID-19 and protect other patients from being infected with the virus.

Now, everyone who needs emergency care enters through the new curbside system. Those who need care stay in

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A test administered during a curbside screening is packaged for sending to the state lab.

ST. LUKE PHOTO

“The only way we’re going to reduce the risk of suicide is to talk about it and raise awareness.”

- Karl Rosston, Montana Dept. of Health and Human Services Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Physicians integrate suicide prevention training into practice

ST. LUKE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS are now prepared to offer suicide prevention treatment alongside their care for a patient’s physical well-being. St. Luke staff recently attended a training led by Montana Department of Health and Human Services Suicide Prevention Coordinator Karl Rosston.

“The only way we’re going to reduce the risk of suicide is to talk about it and raise awareness,” Rosston said. “We know depression is treatable and suicide is preventable.”

Rosston’s training focused on the ways primary care providers can assess a patient’s risk of suicide and provide treatment during the course of regular visits.

Primary care providers are uniquely positioned to prevent suicide. According to Rosston, nearly half of people who die by suicide saw their primary care doctor within one month of their death. If healthcare providers are attuned to the warning signs of suicide, they can intervene at a critical moment to save a patient’s life.

In a time when mental health care is hard to access, primary care providers are stepping in to fill the need for this critical care. St. Luke physicians are now better equipped to support patients at risk of suicide.

Rosston said he trained about 60 nurses, doctors, and community members.

The current COVID-19 pandemic can compound mental health struggles – making it more important than ever that physicians are tuned in to their patients’ risk factors for suicide. According to Rosston, suicide is a product of people being stressed and feeling

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KEEP DOING THE NEXT RIGHT THING

I keep reminding myself (perhaps convincing myself) that one of the fortunate benefits of social distancing has been the ability to spend “quality time” with family. A couple of weeks ago, as my family began to isolate, we took the opportunity to watch the recently released movie Frozen 2. It was through this “quality time” that I was reminded of an important lesson which has been a helpful guide during this tumultuous time. During the movie when Anna was faced with a challenging situation and the future was uncertain, she came to the realization that the only thing she could do was “the next right thing.”

I have continued to remind myself of this lesson and have seen it exemplified within the walls of St. Luke by our staff, and in so many other areas in our Community. So, while I would question my ability as a discerning movie critic, I can say that the movie was definitely worth watching.

It’s reassuring to know that when faced with huge challenges and lots of unknowns, you have a team that can come together, work through issues, help each other out, and do the next right thing. You can be proud of the St. Luke team and the great work they are doing. It is truly amazing to see the hard work, commitment, and dedication of our team. Sure, we have had our struggles, but through this process we have been able to work through them and come up with solutions that work.

Another group that is doing the next right thing includes our Lake County partners. We’ve been having calls twice a week, to share information, review lessons learned, and discuss any challenges. This collaborative group includes Providence St. Joseph Medical Center, Polson Health (KRH), Tribal Health, Lake County Health Department, Polson Ambulance, Lake County Joint Incident Command, Polson Health & Rehab and several others. A huge thanks to all those involved.



Our Community continues to do the next right thing in so many ways:

Following the guidelines for social distancing, adhering to the shelter in place order, trying to limit trips to the grocery store, and keeping activities limited to only those that are essential

Calling in to St. Luke prior to coming in, asking the right questions, and trying to stay on top of all the changing information

Working with our clinicians to alter your care, whether that is talking to the nurse or physician over the phone, or setting up the technology to meet your provider for your virtual visit

Coming in for health care services when you need to and following the screening process

Making homemade masks and donating them and other personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure the safety of our staff, patients, and community

Small gestures of kindness, helping to support others through this process and reaching out to those you care about – remembering that even though you may be far apart you’re still connected

Remembering to support our local businesses in any way we can, because we know we are, indeed, all in this together

Thanking caregivers who are on the front lines. There have been so many kind gestures that businesses and individuals have done for our staff – it has been appreciated by everyone here

These actions have created a positive impact and we need to all remain vigilant and not become lax, so that we can get through the next few months in the best possible way. Thanks to all for doing the next right thing!

Steve

their vehicles for an initial screening from a provider, rather than entering a lobby and waiting for screening. A physician, nurse practitioner, or emergency room doctor is available for curbside screening.

Patients who present symptoms that could indicate they have COVID-19 do not enter the hospital. Potential signs of COVID-19 include a new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, a fever over 100 degrees, and a loss of taste, smell or appetite. After driving up to the curbside triage area, these patients are immediately tested for influenza and strep throat, illnesses that share many characteristics with the novel coronavirus. Those test results come back within minutes. If the patient does have one of those illnesses, they receive treatment right on the spot. If not, patients are assessed for risk factors associated with COVID-19. If a patient is identified as high risk, the test is administered at the curb. Those who are administered a COVID-19 test are given instructions for caring for themselves while quarantining at home and awaiting results. Results take 24-48 hours.

HEALTH WATCH

For those experiencing suicidal thoughts, or know someone who is: please reach out.

1-800-273-8255
SuicidePreventionLifeline.org
Text MT to 741-741

suicide prevention (from page 1)

powerless to change their situation. “When people already have some risk factors and then you throw in the stress that goes with this pandemic, it’s vital that our healthcare providers have the tools to evaluate and assess their patients,” Rosston said.



Karl Rosston

Those who are struggling with mental health in light of the pandemic should reach out to their primary care physician for support. Rosston introduced training attendees to a number of suicide prevention tools they could implement immediately. The first is a depression screening questionnaire that can be used for people age 12 and older. Based on the results of that screening, participants learned how to assess risk for suicide. Rosston then taught providers how to help create a prevention and support plan to keep individuals safe during situations that might lead to suicide. This plan includes strategies for patients to redirect their thinking away from suicidal thoughts, and creating a list of family members and medical providers who the patient can turn to if they are feeling at risk. Providers were also taught to follow up with patients who are at risk for suicide after their visit. Rosston said a check in helps patients feel a sense of belonging, which can reduce their risk for suicide. The only way to stop depression and suicide, he said, is for people to feel comfortable talking about their mental health struggles with friends, family, and healthcare providers. Those who are interested in speaking with their primary care provider about mental health can schedule a regular appointment.

You should truly not leave your home unless its an essential trip.

The emergency room is still treating patients who do not have COVID-19 symptoms as normal. Once providers rule out coronavirus at the curb, they direct patients to a waiting room. Patients who need emergency care while showing symptoms of the virus are immediately given a mask and bypass the waiting room to limit contact with other patients. Those who providers suspect have COVID-19 are treated in designated rooms that patients who don’t show symptoms of the virus never enter. Reffner said hospital staff and healthcare providers are relying on community members to change their habits as well, to ensure that St. Luke is able to care for everyone who comes down with the virus. One way community members can ease pressure on healthcare workers is by limiting trips to the emergency room to

true emergencies. Any trip to the hospital puts people at risk of contracting the virus. A better choice for those needing non-emergent care is to call their primary care provider. Most importantly, community members can help prevent virus spread by staying home and avoiding contact with people from outside their residence. According to Reffner, it’s clear that people are interpreting the stay at home order with various degrees of seriousness. She wants to provide clarity: people should not be gathering with groups outside of their homes for any reason. That means no birthday parties, no study groups, and no playdates. “You should truly not leave your home unless it’s an essential trip,” Reffner said. Those who have essential jobs can attend their jobs, and people can make trips to the grocery store. One person should do the shopping for the entire household. Otherwise, leaving the house puts you at risk for contracting or spreading the virus. Reffner has a few other pieces of advice for community members during the pandemic. “Wash your hands, try to stay calm, and use common sense,” she said.

Mental health self care tips shared

Ways to support yourself during Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation

- UNDERSTAND THE RISK** - Consider the real risk of harm to yourself and others around you. The public perception of risk during a situation such as an infectious disease outbreak is often inaccurate. Stay up to date on what is happening, while limiting your media exposure.
- Be your own advocate** - Speaking out about your needs is particularly important if you are in quarantine, since you may not be in a hospital or other facility where your basic needs are met.
- Educate yourself** - Health care providers and health authorities should provide information on the disease, its diagnosis, and treatment.
- Work with your employer to reduce financial stress** – Be clear with your employer if you’re unable to work and contact your utility providers, cable and Internet provider, and other companies from whom you get monthly bills to explain your situation and request alternative bill payment arrangements as needed.
- Connect with others** - Reaching out to people you trust (telephone, email, text messaging, and social media) is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness, and boredom during social distancing, quarantine, and isolation.
- Talk to your doctor** - If you are in a medical facility, you may have access to health care providers who can answer your questions. However, if you are quarantined at home, and you’re worried about physical symptoms you or your loved ones may be experiencing, call your doctor or other health care provider.
- Use practical ways to cope and relax** - Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate or pray, or engage in activities you enjoy. Pace yourself between stressful activities. Talk about your experiences and feelings to loved ones and friends. Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.
- Exercise** – Exercising releases endorphins and reduces stress. Exercise doesn’t have to be complicated. Go for a walk, do some calisthenics, stretch.
- Emphasize Social Vitamin C** – Courtesy, Consideration, Caring, Community, and Compassion. In the words of Dr. Benjamin Cheyette, “this is one time when you



BIGSTOCK PHOTO

Engage in activities you enjoy to relax your body and maintain positive thinking. really don’t want to ‘be first,’ so make an effort to be especially courteous to your fellow human beings when you are at the grocery store, out in other public spaces, or driving on the road. Have consideration for others when using a public or private facility – even if you’re not symptomatic and don’t think you’re infected, do your best to keep the area clean and hygienic for those who come after you. If you do encounter someone who may be infected, be courteous, considerate, caring, and compassionate. **Resources available** The following crisis resources are available for all Montanans. If you or someone you love is at risk of harm to self: call the Montana Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 800-273-8255 (TALK) or go to <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> The Montana Crisis Text Line, text MT to 741741 or go to <https://www.crisistextline.org/> **If you need someone to talk to:** Call the Montana Warmline at 877-688-3377. If you are working to manage anxiety and depression during this time: call Montana THRIVE (computerized cognitive behavior therapy) at <https://thriveformontana.com/>

Support St. Luke’s response to COVID-19

AS PROVIDERS CARE FOR A POTENTIAL INCREASING NUMBER OF PATIENTS suffering from COVID-19 and take extra precautions to prevent the spread of the virus, St. Luke is looking to the community for support. Community members can donate funds and supplies to St. Luke’s COVID-19 response efforts. While St. Luke does have enough personal protective equipment to meet healthcare providers’ current needs, demand for the equipment may exceed supply in the future. Masks are St. Luke’s most pressing need. Donations of N95 masks and surgical masks will be accepted. Community members can also sew home-made cotton masks, using an approved pattern that can be found at stlukehealthcare.org/covid-19-rapid-response/. Tablets, iPads, and webcams can help physicians provide telehealth services to patients. These devices will also allow patients to stay in touch with their loved ones. Please have these donations approved by calling 406-528-5324 before dropping them off. St. Luke is also seeking the following items, new and unopened in their original packaging: • Exam & surgical gloves • Tyvek suits, paint suits • Impervious Gowns • Hand sanitizer (un-expired) Community members can drop off their donations at the loading dock on the west side of the hospital. Items will be accepted every Tuesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Other drop off arrangements can be made outside of these hours. St. Luke can provide donation receipts upon request. Questions about supply

donations can be directed to 406-528-5324. Those who would like to support St. Luke by donating funds to the COVID-19 response, you can do so at stlukehealthcare.org/foundation/ or by calling 406-528-5226. St. Luke sends out a heart-felt thank you to everyone who has already donated and to those who have been so eager to assist with response efforts. This response highlights how our community truly comes together in challenging times!

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Spring Quarter: Lacey Phelan

Lacey is passionate about her work and provides her patients with an enthusiasm that inspires them to do better. Patients go out of their way to tell Lacey hello. She is extremely skilled and has a gift of connecting with patients. Lacey embodies St. Luke’s values and represents us well.



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Families should make sure to include soothing physical movement in their daily routine.

TRANSITIONING TO NEW ROLES

Social worker shares skills for managing kids at home

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CLOSED SCHOOLS and workplaces, which means that many parents are spending more time with their children than ever. The added stress of the pandemic means many families are feeling overwhelmed.

Social worker Rick Greene shared tips for maintaining a supportive environment for children despite the stress of the pandemic.

Greene said it's important for parents to recognize that their own emotional state has a significant impact on their children's emotions and behavior.

"Emotions are contagious," Green said.

The main trick to preventing escalation that can turn into child abuse is for parents to remain aware of their own emotions. Child abuse often happens when parents stop using rational thinking and move into a "fight or flight" response, which clouds their judgement. Parents need to model rational problem solving during tense moments for their children.

A loss of schedule can cause children distress that may turn into unwanted behavior. Greene suggests that during school closures families maintain a predictable schedule. Parents can post a schedule or talk their children through the plan for the day so children know what to expect.

Social isolation can also be hard on children. Greene advises families to focus on giving children a sense of community despite the need for social distancing. Parents can help their children talk on the phone, video chat, or text with people who are important community members.

Families should also make sure to include soothing physical movement in their daily routine. Online resources provide instructions for yoga positions and stretches that help to reduce stress.

Parents should also help their children think about the future, when life will return to normal.

"We really want to help them look at the future with hope," Greene said. "Things are going to go on. We need to help them see that."

In addition to ensuring that children feel safe and secure during the pandemic, parents need to make sure they're taking time to care for themselves. Parents should make sure they're getting daily exercise, taking medication, and maintaining personal connections during social distancing. Caregivers should set boundaries that give them time alone to take a break from caring for children when children have their needs met. Parents should also make sure to manage their own pandemic-induced stress. Parents should confer with other adults about their fears, rather than expressing them to children.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. The declaration aims to raise awareness about the impacts of child abuse and provide parents and families tools to prevent child abuse from happening.

"There is a long-term negative impact on a person's psyche and ability for social connection when they experience certain adverse childhood experiences," Greene said. If parents learn to regulate their own emotions, they are less likely to abuse their children.

Those who feel like they are at risk of committing child abuse, or who suspect that a friend or family member's child is being abused can contact the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453).

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Children under 5 are at the highest risk of being undercounted.
In Montana, that's almost **50,000** kids.



For More Information Visit:
CENSUS.MT.GOV

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ECF **PROFILE: Vivian Vance**

VIVIAN (BJORGEN) VANCE WAS BORN on June 2nd, 1928 in Ross, ND. The daughter of Oscar and Louise Bjorgen, she grew up on a farm in North Dakota, near Westby, Montana. She attended school in Westby, crossing the state line each day to do so. Her mother passed away when she was only eight, leaving her in charge of her three younger brothers. Vivian carried a heavy burden for one so young, but took to managing her siblings well, even as they grew taller and pushed back on her authority! In 1947, Vivian met Harold Vance through her church and, after a whirl-wind six-month courtship, the two were married on her 19th birthday! They moved to Ronan, where Harold’s parents lived, and Vivian took to the scenic country-side right away. Harold worked as a Carpenter and School Bus Driver and together they raised three children: Danny, Darlene, and Barb. Vivian stayed at home with her children and worked part-time. She wrote a “What’s New in the Neighborhood?” column for the Ronan Pioneer, polling her rural neighbors for exciting news to share. She also sold Avon, which



Vivan Vance

allowed her to socialize, one of her favorite activities. Vivian’s flowers and garden were also very important to her. She spent many hours in the garden and recruited her children to help with weeding and canning. She enjoyed photography, taking her camera with her everywhere she went. While her children dreaded the constant shutter-clicking, her daughter, Barb, now embraces the hobby herself. Vivian and Harold were happily married for 62 years. Harold was a romantic, referring to Vivian as his “sweetheart” and gifting her with hand-made Valentine’s each year. Since his passing, Vivian has settled into our Extended Care Facility, where she enjoys stories, her favorite shows such as Gunsmoke and Bonanza, and visits from family and friends. Vivian is the proud Grandmother of 10 and Great-Grandmother of 12! She still values family and faith, and her infectious laughter can be heard throughout the facility. Vivian has always embraced change. She moved around the Mission Valley 11 times, finding fun, new ways to arrange her home and garden. She tried out any new food, gadget, or technology that came out...whatever there was to try, she wanted to try it! Even now, she welcomes change by adapting to video-chatting with her family members. While talking with her daughter last week she said, “I love this new technology!” May we all be like Vivian in this time of change. Learning, adapting, and embracing the positives!

Telehealth now available

IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY, St. Luke is exploring new and alternative care methods to continue serving our community. Our patients will now have the option to attend primary care and behavioral health appointments remotely, from the safety of their homes. This new service uses video chat software, such as FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype, in order to allow medical staff to ask specific questions and gather information to find out whether care is urgently needed, or if a person can continue to self-monitor symptoms at home while recovering. Telehealth is also ideal for routine care, such as Medical Annual Wellness visits and consultations, when a physical exam is not necessarily warranted. The current public health crisis makes virtual care solutions like telehealth an indispensable tool as COVID-19 spreads across US communities. Patients will need a device (phone, tablet, laptop, or desktop) with internet connection, microphone, and a camera to participate in telehealth appointments. This might sound complicated, but most modern devices are already telehealth capable. Your primary care team can help you determine if you are a good candidate for telehealth visits. Please reach out to any of our primary care clinics in Ronan, Polson, or St. Ignatius to determine if this alternative care method is the right choice for you. In addition to providing telehealth services in our primary care clinics, we are



BIGSTOCK PHOTO

The current public health crisis makes virtual care solutions like telehealth an indispensable tool. offering telehealth services for some of our physical, occupational, and speech therapy appointments. Our therapists will be reaching out to patients who are good candidates for telehealth services. To start the Telehealth process, please enroll in our patient portal at stlukehealthcare.org/myhealth-portal-enrollment.

NUTRITION **CORNER**

The Mediterranean Lifestyle

By Lillie Hawkins, MSU Dietetic Intern

WHAT IS IT? The Mediterranean lifestyle is termed from its place of origin – the Mediterranean Sea. Scientists are finding that people inhabiting these coastal towns of Europe are some of the healthiest people on Earth. The eating pattern centers on the basis that humans should be eating mostly fresh, whole foods including plenty of whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables. There is also an emphasis on incorporating healthy fats- specifically in the form of fish, olive oil, avocado, and nuts/seeds. Another important aspect of the Mediterranean lifestyle is the idea that cooking and mealtime should be an enjoyable experience spent socializing with those you love.

Who does it benefit? The better question might be: who does it not benefit? People who follow this eating pattern tend to live long, disease-free lives. The benefits range from cardiovascular protection and blood sugar control to weight management and improved mental health. The eating pattern provides plenty of fiber, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory foods, while leaving processed foods, saturated fats, or added sugars out of regular eating habits (any foods can be part of a healthy life in moderation). In addition, this eating pattern fosters a healthy relationship with food and an active lifestyle. In light of Alcohol Awareness Month, the aspect of the Mediterranean lifestyle that is worthy of special attention is their drinking habits. Sceptics argue that alcohol should not be a part of a healthy lifestyle whatsoever; however, the Mediterranean lifestyle allows for a moderate amount of red wine with dinner, and longevity persists among those who engage in this. The main characteristic that differentiates these drinking habits from others is how they drink. A glass or two (5 oz per serving) of red wine is sipped on throughout the event of cooking and eating dinner with friends and family. It goes down slowly, dispersed throughout bites of food. Drinking is not the activity at hand, but rather a side note to social engagement, laughter, and a wholesome meal. Use these guidelines to maintain healthy alcohol consumption habits!



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St. Luke General Surgery 406-676-3600
126 6th Ave. SW

IN ST. IGNATIUS:
St. Luke Community Clinic – St. Ignatius
406-745-2781

www.stlukehealthcare.org

