

**COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES
SENATE AND HOUSE POLICY COMMITTEES**

MAY 13, 2015

GOOD MORNING SENATOR ARGALL, REPRESENTATIVE BENNINGHOFF, MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE POLICY COMMITTEES, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HOSPITAL AND HEALTH ASSOCIATION AND GUESTS. I AM DOROTHY SWEET, DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL PRACTICES AT SCHUYLKILL HEALTH. WE ARE VERY PLEASED TO REPRESENT THE 29th SENATORIAL DISTRICT AS WELL AS THE 123rd, 124th AND 125th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS IN TODAY'S EDUCATIONAL BRIEFING OF COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES. WE THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE A LITTLE OF OUR STORY.

TO HELP SET THE SCENE, SCHUYLKILL HEALTH IS THE PRIMARY SOURCE FOR HEALTHCARE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF SCHUYLKILL COUNTY. PROVIDING SERVICES FOR MORE THAN 120 YEARS, WE ARE ONE OF THE LARGEST EMPLOYERS IN OUR COMMUNITY WITH A WORKFORCE OF APPROXIMATELY THIRTEEN HUNDRED FULL AND PART TIME INDIVIDUALS. OUR HOSPITALS TREAT NEARLY FIFTEEN THOUSAND INPATIENTS EACH YEAR AND MORE THAN FIFTY THOUSAND PEOPLE THROUGH OUR EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS. SCHUYLKILL HEALTH OFFERS AN EXTENSIVE VARIETY OF INPATIENT AND OUTPATIENT SERVICES AT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY. WE HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITY IN BOTH THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE AND IN THE IMPACT FROM THE SALARIES WE PROVIDE AND THE LOCAL GOODS AND SERVICES WE PURCHASE.

QUITE LITERALLY, WE HAVE OUR FINGERS ON THE PULSE OF OUR COMMUNITY. WE OPERATE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR.

COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES TYPICALLY GO BEYOND TRADITIONAL HOSPITAL SERVICES. IN SCHUYLKILL COUNTY, OUR NEEDS ARE MANY AND OUR RESOURCES ARE LIMITED. DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, WE BELIEVE WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY AND FOR THOSE WE SERVE.

IN THE TWO PROGRAMS WE WILL OUTLINE TODAY, ONE IS RECENT, SHORT-TERM PROGRAM THE OTHER HAS BEEN ONGOING FOR YEARS. WE BELIEVE BOTH SHOW HOW EARLY INTERVENTION CAN HELP AT-RISK POPULATIONS.

FIRST IS A PRE-DIABETIC EDUCATION PROGRAM. CURRENTLY, SCHUYLKILL HEALTH, IN COOPERATION WITH THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE PENNSYLVANIA HEALTH PROMOTION COUNCIL IS MID-WAY THROUGH A 16-WEEK PROGRAM AS PART OF THE NATIONAL DIABETES PREVENTION PROGRAM. THIS EDUCATIONAL SERIES PROMOTES LIFESTYLE CHANGES THAT HAVE SHOWN TO DELAY OR PREVENT TYPE 2 DIABETES IN HIGH RISK PATIENTS. THE INCIDENCE OF DIABETES IN OUR COMMUNITY IS QUITE HIGH AND THE HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH DIABETES CAN BE SEVERE.

SESSIONS ARE HELD IN BOTH THE CITY OF POTTSVILLE AND THE BOROUGH OF SHENANDOAH – AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY IN OUR COUNTY – EVERY WEEK THROUGH THE END OF JUNE. FOLLOWING THE 16 WEEKS, MONTHLY SESSIONS WILL BE HELD THROUGH THE END OF THE YEAR. THIS PROGRAM STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF DIET, PROPER NUTRITION, EXERCISE AND OTHER FACTORS AND CONSIDERATIONS. IN ADDITION TO THOSE ATTENDING, THE SCHUYLKILL HEALTH WAS ALSO ABLE TO CREATE A COMMUNITY DIALOUGE ON DIABETES AWARENESS AND PREVENTION THROUGH LOCAL NEWS MEDIA, TALK SHOW APPEARANCES AND HEALTH SYSTEM EVENTS.

TWO CLINICAL NURSE DIABETES EDUCATORS FROM OUR STAFF LEAD THE PROGRAM. THROUGH THE FIRST NINE WEEKS, THEY REPORT THAT ATTENDEES ARE ENGAGED, LOSING WEIGHT, REDUCING BLOOD PRESSURE, CHANGING EATING HABITS, BECOMING MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE... AND ULTIMATELY REDUCE THEIR RISKS OF SERIOUS ILLNESS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS OF DIABETES.

WE ARE PLEASED TO REINFORCE THIS MESSAGE THROUGH OUR ANNUAL FIVE-K WALK – RUN FOR DIABETES AWARENESS AND EDUCATION. THIS PAST YEAR WE HAD MORE THAN 375 WALKERS AND RUNNERS. THEY REPRESENT INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS FROM LOCAL SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES, CHURCH AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS. WE ALSO HAVE PARTNERED WITH OTHER HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS DURING THIS EVENT TO OUR COMMUNITY.

THE SECOND PROGRAM WE PROFILE TODAY IS OUR VETERANS CLINIC. THIS CLINIC PROVIDES SERVICES TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF SCHUYLKILL COUNTY WHO HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY THROUGH MILITARY SERVICE.

HERE WITH US TODAY IS – ANDY KNEPP, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT IN OUR VETERANS CLINIC AND ALSO A VETERAN OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY AND MICHAEL PECKMAN, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AT SCHUYLKIL HEALTH (ALSO POSSIBLY A PATIENT).

SCHUYLKILL HEALTH OFFERS VETERANS CLINICS IN CENTRALLY LOCATED POTTSVILLE AND ALSO IN THE NORTHERN PART OF OUR COMMUNITY, FRACKVILLE.

WE HAVE 2250 VETERANS ENROLLED IN OUR PROGRAM. THE CLINICS OPERATE FIVE DAYS PER WEEK. WE TYPICALLY SEE ____ PATIENTS WEEKLY AT BOTH CLINICS.

SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH OUR CLINIC INCLUDE:

- PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE
- DIAGNOSIS & MANAGEMENT OF ACUTE AND CHRONIC DISEASE PROCESSES
- ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL ISSUES
- EDUCATION
- REFERRAL SERVICES
- EKGs
- ANCILARY SERVICES INCLUDING X-RAY, MAMMOGRAPHY, AND LABORATORY
- VACCINATIONS

WE WORK IN COOPERATION WITH THE REGIONAL VA HOSPITALS TO SUPPORT THE SERVICES THAT OUR VETERANS GET THROUGH THEM. FOR SOME, OUR SERVICES CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS AN ANNUAL PHYSICAL AND/OR FLU SHOT. FOR OTHERS, WE SERVE AS THEIR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT WHEN THESE VETERANS ARE IN NEED OF MEDICAL DIAGNOSTICS OR ROUTINE CLINICAL INTERVENTIONS. WE CAN PROVIDE MANAGEMENT FOR THEIR ACUTE OR CHRONIC DISEASES AND WORK WITH SUB-SPECIALISTS IN EITHER THE VA SYSTEM OR WITHIN THE COMMUNITY TO HELP MATCH THE SERVICES WITH THE VETERAN'S NEEDS.

NATURALLY WHEN NEEDED OR WHEN APPROPRIATE, THE VETERANS ENROLLED IN OUR CLINIC HAVE ACCESS TO THE VA MEDICAL CENTERS IN OUR REGION.

WE KNOW OUR VETERANS, AS A GROUP – CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS IN ANY COMMUNITY. WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE THESE CLINICS HERE IN SCHUYLKILL COUNTY. WE KNOW THAT IF THESE SERVICES WERE NOT AVAILABLE, MANY OF THESE VETERANS WOULD FOREGO TREATMENT OR DELAY CARE. THAT IS A PRESCRIPTION FOR VERY POOR OUTCOMES. WE ARE VERY PLEASED THAT WE HAVE A ROLE IN ADDRESSING THE HEALTHCARE NEEDS OF OUR VETERANS.

EACH YEAR, NEAR VETERANS DAY, WE HOST A VETERANS BREAKFAST, WHICH ALSO SERVES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTNER WITH THE VA, SHCUYLKILL COUNTY'S VETERANS DEPARTMENT AND LOCAL VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS TO HELP PROVIDE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE VETERANS.

IT IS WELL RECEIVED AND HELPS CONNECT THE VETERANS WITH THE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION THEY ARE ENTITLED TO HAVE.

THESE ARE JUST TWO EXAMPLES OF HOW COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES CAN IMPACT A COMMUNITY AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

WE THANK HAP AND THE COMMITTEE FOR WELCOMING US HERE TODAY.

