



# Year Four Report to the Community



  
**heartsbeatback**  
THE HEART OF NEW ULM PROJECT

“ It may be a bit difficult for those of us who live here and are part of it to see, but Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is big news in the world of health care and medicine.

The fact that U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin traveled here to observe one event associated with the project gives us all an idea that this program to make this a healthier community is considered important.

It certainly made news when it was first announced, perhaps as much for its big, attention-getting goal — to eliminate heart attacks in New Ulm within 10 years. But it has big implications for the contribution it is making to another debate — what is the best way to provide health care in this country? Health care providers know it is much cheaper to prevent disease than to treat it, but getting people to adopt healthier lifestyles isn't that easy.

In the Heart of New Ulm, health care professionals are taking a leadership role, engaging with the community and using its medical data to identify risks. It is working with restaurants and stores to provide better nutrition options, and encouraging exercise groups and programs through neighborhood and workplace groups.

If it works here, it can be a lesson for other communities.

Here's to the Heart of New Ulm's success and to our health.

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— “HONU gets national attention,” *New Ulm Journal*, Oct. 1, 2012

*Cover photos:*

*Top: U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin with students from Martin Luther College at the New Ulm Area Day of Play*

*Bottom left: Customers at Hy-Vee enjoyed samples from a Heart of New Ulm cooking demonstration*

*Bottom second from left: Katy Hemberger from August Earth Farm at a New Ulm farmers market*

*Bottom second from right: New Ulm native and two-time Olympic wrestler Ali Bernard at the Fifth Annual Community Summit*

*Bottom right: Jingle Bell Jam 5K Run/Walk for Brown County Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention*

# Our community is really working hard to get healthy!

Over the last four years, I have seen so many changes in New Ulm around healthful lifestyles. Each day when I leave work, I see the parking lot at the New Ulm Recreational Center full. I see more people walking, running and riding bikes. Various organizations in New Ulm and throughout the county now sponsor running/walking events with good attendance. I hear about worksites with wellness committees and wellness programs that are starting or expanding.

I can go out to lunch almost anywhere and be able to look at the menu and see what the healthier options are so I can make the healthful choice. At the Brown County Community Services Building where I work, we had our pop machine picked up because people were no longer using it. I know that the people of New Ulm are embracing the idea of living healthier lives.

The community of New Ulm needs to continue to work hard toward the goal of living a healthful lifestyle and creating a community that supports and encourages that. The Heart of New Ulm Project (HONU) is here and has started us on that path. The programming is evidence-based and solid in the theory that we can change our environment, the systems, and the policies that surround us every day to make the “healthful choice the easy choice.” Community input has helped us make the project our own and not just something that “they” do.

As the public health director, my role involves continuously looking at our communities and identifying things that could be adversely affecting residents’ health. It’s no surprise that in 2010, we identified through a countywide survey that more than two-thirds of residents were overweight.

At that time, the state legislature had appropriated funds for all county public health

departments to work with the community, schools, health care and worksites to invest in strategies to help improve nutrition, increase physical activity and reduce tobacco use. We looked to The Heart of New Ulm Project as a partner with similar goals and assisted them with funds for worksite wellness



Karen Moritz

We can change our environment, the systems, and the policies that surround us every day to make the “healthful choice the easy choice.”

programs and for the creation of a healthful living resources brochure. Recently, we partnered with the project to successfully obtain another grant, which will help us expand some of HONU’s programs countywide.

Let’s take advantage of the work of the Heart of New Ulm and make this our own. Get involved in activities, check what’s happening on the project’s website and sign up for the email list. If your worksite has a wellness program, take the extra step to participate in what it offers. If you do not have a wellness committee, see if you can help get one started. Set a healthy goal for yourself and let the Heart of New Ulm’s activities and suggestions help you reach it.

New Ulm has so many things going for it. We are known throughout the state for our festivals and fun. Let’s continue to work as a community to be known for being one of Minnesota’s healthiest communities to live in. We can do this.

Karen Moritz  
Director, Brown County Public Health  
Member, Heart of New Ulm Steering Committee

# Social norms are changing and New Ulm is on board!

## Next up: Achieving long-term sustainability



Jackie Boucher

It is hard to believe we have finished the fourth year of the project and moved on to year five! It seems like just yesterday I was driving to New Ulm to meet with community leaders to see if they thought the community would be interested in improving health and preventing heart attacks through

The Heart of New Ulm Project. At our first meeting, I recall people saying, “People in New Ulm are often skeptics and don’t easily get on board when something new starts, but once they get on board, they are really on board.” Today I think we can honestly say the community is on board!

The data we have been collecting through screenings and the electronic health record show New Ulm is changing and “on board.” Yet to me the more interesting visible signs that small changes have occurred are related to social norms. It’s things like the occasional letter to the editor of the newspaper commenting on changes in lifestyle, such as a letter some time ago that asked if published recipes could be more heart-healthy. It’s the emails or letters from current and former New Ulm residents talking about how they believe the community is changing and getting healthier, or the restaurant manager noting that people are asking for healthier options on the menu. These are significant signals that the community norms are changing — that people really do want healthier lifestyles to be a way of life.

The data, and these small changes, have led to much national attention, success and momentum, which we hope we can maintain in the years to come. We have been fortunate to have funding from Allina Health for this project. In the next few years, this funding will come to an end, meaning we are going to need to think about how we sustain the program in the community and how individuals sustain all the positive health behaviors they’ve made. We will need the entire community’s help in thinking about the program, funding sources

and potential partners who can help us achieve sustainability over the long-term.

In the meantime, while we work on developing a strategic plan to strengthen policies, systems and environmental changes to sustain the program, including health behavior changes, what can **you** do to help?

**Participate:** In addition to participating in our programs, we also need you to participate in our next heart health screenings, which will be offered again in 2014. These screenings are important because they help you individually gauge your health and your personal progress in preventing heart disease. They also help us determine what is working and how we can continue to improve the health of the New Ulm community, as well as demonstrate to the project’s funders how well we are doing and increase our chances of future funding.

**Activate:** Wherever you live, work, play or learn, think of ways to make the healthful choice the easier choice. We need your help getting people, businesses, organizations involved in health. If we can find ways to get individuals active or create healthier food choices wherever food is offered, we are more likely to be successful long-term.

**Partner:** The project does not have to end — it *can* continue. But we will need businesses, social clubs, organizations and individuals to get involved. Volunteer time, resources, or donate to the New Ulm Medical Center Foundation. Our future depends on all of us making the commitment to ensure the future health of the community.

Our goal is to help New Ulm stay the healthier course. So help us help you.

In good health,

Jackie Boucher, MS, RD, CDE, vice president of education, Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation and project director, Heart of New Ulm Project

## New Ulm is making promising health changes

Results from HONU's first three years show New Ulm residents are making positive behavioral changes in nutrition and exercise as well as showing promising improvements in improving their blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

### Screening results data trends

Our screening data compares changes among residents age 40 to 79 who attended our free heart health screenings in both 2009 and 2011 (about 19 percent of the population of New Ulm). It shows dramatic improvements in healthful behaviors. Changes include:

- An increase in the number of people eating five or more fruits and vegetables per day from 19 percent to 33 percent
- Improvement in the number of people taking daily aspirin from 32 percent to 40 percent
- An increase in the percent of people getting 150 minutes a week of moderate exercise from 67 percent to 77 percent

### Electronic Health Record (EHR) data trends

The EHR data compares risk factor results for residents age 40 to 79 from the beginning of the project (2008-2009) to current data (2010-2011).

It provides a more representative estimate of changes in heart disease risk factors in the whole community, because it represents between 75 and 81 percent of the population in the 40 to 79 age group.

EHR data trends show:

- A decrease in the percent of residents with high blood pressure from nearly 21 percent to less than 18 percent
- A decrease in the percent of residents with high cholesterol from nearly 11 percent to less than 9 percent
- A decrease in the percent of residents with high triglycerides from nearly 34 percent to just under 32 percent

**Electronic Health Record data show New Ulm residents are making bigger improvements in blood pressure and cholesterol than are being seen in trends for the rest of the nation.**



A step aerobics class at the New Ulm Recreation Center  
Photo credit STAR TRIBUNE/MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL 2013.

## New Ulm's progress impresses the U.S. Surgeon General

The Heart of New Ulm Project was honored to have U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin visit Minnesota in September 2012, in part to learn more about the project and its success. HONU was highlighted along with several other projects during a panel discussion as part of the Healthy Minnesota: Communities in Action presentation at the Minnesota Public Health Association's annual meeting, which featured closing remarks from Dr. Benjamin.

The following day, Dr. Benjamin traveled to New Ulm to kick off the Day of Play event, which was sponsored by Martin Luther College, HONU, New Ulm Medical Center and other local donors. The Day of Play is part of a worldwide event started by a children's TV channel to get kids outside and away from TV through fun activities.

Hundreds of community members showed up throughout the day for the free family event, which featured activities for all ages. Dr. Benjamin commended New Ulm residents for their engagement in the project and highlighted how closely the project aligns with the national prevention strategy.

“ We tell people they have to be more active and eat healthier. But, we have to also make it easier for them. This is a great start and the idea is to keep it growing. The Heart of New Ulm Project is going to prevent heart attacks and keep people healthy. In the long run, it will save lives.

— Dr. Regina Benjamin at New Ulm's Day of Play

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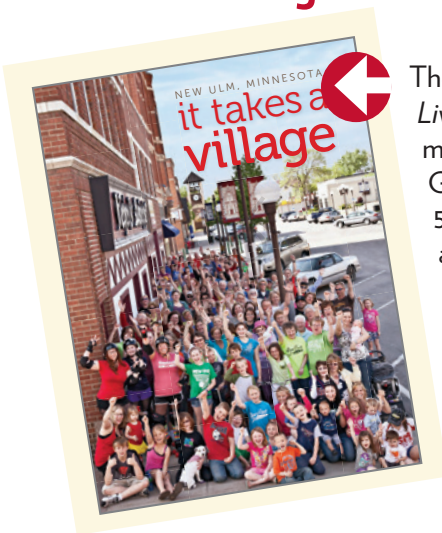
Upper left: Dr. Benjamin talked with a member of the audience after her opening remarks.

Upper right: The Heart of New Ulm team with Dr. Benjamin and former Minneapolis Heart Institute president Dr. Kevin Graham, who helped create The Heart of New Ulm Project.

Lower left: Kids enjoyed hula hooping, rock wall climbing, geocaching, jump roping, kite flying, bounce houses and more.

Lower right: Dr. Benjamin checked out local products at a farmers market booth.

## National magazines take notice



The Fall 2012 issue of *Diabetic Living* magazine, a special interest magazine of Better Homes & Gardens that reaches more than 500,000 households, included a feature article on the project.

The February 2013 issue of *EatingWell* magazine also included a feature article, "The Town That Lost 7,961 Pounds."



## Funders like our ideas, too

**Heart of Brown County:** The Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation (MHIF) was awarded a federal grant of \$204,275 as part of the Community Transformation Grants program administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MHIF is the only organization in Minnesota that was awarded one of these highly competitive grants. MHIF and Brown County Public Health will use the funding over a two-year period to expand some elements of HONU countywide to improve the health of residents.

In 2012, The Heart of New Ulm Project and the community's success in making healthful lifestyle changes garnered well-earned attention from the U.S. Surgeon General, national media and funding organizations.

**Eating Well While Eating Out:** The project was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Minnesota Beef Council to create a short video to educate consumers on how to make heart-healthy food and beverage choices while eating out in restaurants.

**HeartBeat Connections Program:** Our phone coaching program was selected as the recipient of a \$20,000 grant from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation. The grant funding will be used to measure the effectiveness of a phone-based program compared to standard clinical care in helping people who are at high risk for heart disease reduce their LDL cholesterol, blood pressure and blood glucose.

**Community Health Challenge and SWAP IT to DROP IT™ campaign:** UnitedHealth Group awarded the project two grants totaling \$1.06 million. To address weight management, an \$836,000 grant is being used in 2013 to expand a Community Health Challenge program in New Ulm. The LOSE IT to WIN IT challenge will launch in mid-2013. A secondary grant of \$164,000 helped with an eight-month health communications campaign and accompanying social media campaign to promote initiatives that help improve the nutrition environment.

## Local employers promote a culture of wellbeing

Throughout 2012, employers continued to embrace resources, tools and consulting from HONU as they worked to engage their workforce in practicing a culture of wellbeing while at work.

### Lifestyle change programs

More than 20 employers participated in offering one of HONU's three lifestyle change programs available in 2012: *Worksite on the Move*, the *SWAP IT to DROP IT Community Health Challenge* and *Holiday Trimmings*.

### Self-care program

Thirteen New Ulm employers signed on to offer a new self-care program at their worksite, designed to help employers save on health care costs. By teaching employees self-care, they learn to make efficient and appropriate use of medical services, as well as make better-informed health care decisions. The Heart of New Ulm Project provided free copies of the "Healthier at Home" self-care books to employees and a class on using the books.



At the event, HONU introduced its new workplace awards program. Each year, the vast majority of employees attempt healthful lifestyle goals such as eating healthier, becoming physically active, managing stress and stopping smoking. These goals are very difficult to achieve without support.

A well workplace embraces employee health and wellbeing by creating a physical and cultural environment that supports lasting and positive lifestyle change. The workplace awards program supports best practices and celebrates each workplace's initiative.

**Social support makes a difference when it comes to making healthful changes!**

**Our research on the *Holiday Trimmings* program showed that people who participated in the program through their worksite achieved more weight loss than people from the community who participated individually.**

### Worksite Summit and workplace award program

Held in October, our annual Worksite Summit featured a presentation by best-selling author and national healthful lifestyle expert Joe Piscatella on "Stress Management for Bailout Times: How you and your employees can manage stress effectively for increased health, longevity and productivity."



## New Ulm Public Schools maintains an ongoing commitment to employee wellness

After school on a clear, crisp day in late October, more than 100 staff members from New Ulm School District #88 gathered at Jefferson Elementary to walk to the other end of town and back again. The three-and-a-half mile walk, called *Take A Hike*, is just one of the monthly wellness events that take place each year.

“At the *Take A Hike* event, staff members could choose to walk, jog, run, push their children in strollers, walk their dogs, however they wanted to finish the course,” said Anita Longtin, New Ulm School District wellness coordinator and physical education/health instructor. “It takes most people anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes. We had more staff who chose to run this year than in past years, which was encouraging.”

All of the 350 to 400 full- and part-time New Ulm district school staff members are invited to participate in heart-healthy activities organized by Longtin, who has been the wellness coordinator for 20 years. “We receive wellness dollars from the Blue Cross/Blue Shield/South Central Coop that help us reward wellness activity participants each year with T-shirts, water bottles, umbrellas, bags, blankets, coolers, healthful snacks and even a discounted price on a state park sticker so they have somewhere to go to hike trails, swim or cross-country ski,” continued Longtin. “We don’t require the staff to train for any of our events. What’s important is that they come and participate.”

The wellness activities change from year to year, but the ultimate goal remains the same — helping staff live healthier lives. This past academic year started with a *Great Grillout* event in September when staff members and their families were invited to a picnic that included heart-healthy food choices.



District wellness committee members (left to right) Anita Longtin, Amy Haala, Paula Wenninger and Linda Beck on a walking meeting; not pictured: Tammy Yackley

Other events throughout the years have included the fall *Take A Hike* event, HONU’s *Holiday Trimmings* program, and a *Twelve Days of Fitness* activity in December. Some years, Longtin and her staff kick off the new year with a *Passport to Wellness Program* that supports sticking to new year’s wellness resolutions. Employees have also celebrated American Heart Month in February by participating in the district’s *Random Acts of Kindness* activity, where they are encouraged to follow a heart-healthy calendar that includes daily tips and ideas to incorporate nutrition, exercise and relaxation into their lives.

In March and April over the years, staff have participated in a six-week *Shape-Up Challenge* and a *Wellness Bowling* activity that features exercise, food and door prizes. A favorite spring

*Continued on page 8*

*Public Schools, continued from page 7*

event is the *Poker Walk*, which involves moving from station to station to collect cards in hopes of getting the best poker card hand, or the *WELLO* activity where staff work to complete wellness activities on a BINGO-type card to win prizes.

Longtin and her staff began their partnership with HONU in 2009 when they participated in the employee heart health screenings and have continued to use resources to support district staff activities.

“Seeing the heart health screening numbers helped participants focus on areas in their overall wellness where they have opportunities to make improvements,” said Longtin. “District-sponsored, after-school wellness classes, posters, emails and the HONU newsletter and website resources all help support the staff in their wellness goals. There’s always more that can be done, but I am proud of our staff’s ongoing commitment to wellness and encouraged by the progress they continue to make.”

## New Ulm Catholic Schools promotes physical and emotional wellness for all as part of its mission

New Ulm Catholic Schools is deeply rooted in the community with a 140-year history and a clear mission and vision that guides its work. “Our mission is to develop the whole person spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially,” said Peter Roufs, principal at Cathedral High School and chair of the wellness committee for New Ulm Area Catholic Schools. “We work to extend this vision to our students and staff.”

“ In our first year of participation in HONU’s *Holiday Trimmings*, our staff members lost a total of 500 pounds. Our results weren’t as dramatic this year, but what was important was how everyone continued to work together to encourage, motivate and support each other. ”

— Peter Roufs,  
New Ulm Catholic Schools

A five-year member of the school staff, Roufs joined New Ulm Catholic Schools in 2008. His nine-member wellness committee includes himself, the school nurse, food service director and health and physical education teachers and

staff members. Focused on school nutrition and education, they work together to coordinate activities and distribute health and wellness information to the 512 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students, staff members and parents, and make school fundraising recommendations that align with the school’s wellness goals.

“Physical and emotional wellness is part of our mission, so the committee’s work helps support what we do. It’s part of developing the whole person,” continued Roufs. “If someone feels good about the healthful choices they make, it will affect the other areas of his or her life, too. We are a small enough community that we can also offer wellness resources to our staff and share health and nutrition information with our parents.”

Roufs joined New Ulm Catholic Schools the same year that the Heart of New Ulm Project was introduced into the larger New Ulm community. “Prior to the Heart of New Ulm, the main focus was on the wellness of our students,” explained Roufs. “The project has really helped us broaden our goals and bring overall wellness issues to the forefront in the minds of our staff. Prior to participation in the project, there wasn’t an organized plan in place. We feel blessed that we now have additional resources.”

Among its 70 staff members, New Ulm Catholic Schools has a 40 to 50 percent participation rate in its wellness activities. An initial worksite screening in 2009 helped them take a look at their overall health and determine where improvements could be made. In 2011, staff members participated in the HONU's *Worksite on the Move* program, where they met once a week to map out and travel a new walking path, and for the past two years they have been motivated through the *Holiday Trimmings* program.

"In our first year of participation in *Holiday Trimmings*, our staff members lost a total of 500 pounds," said Roufs. "Our results weren't as dramatic this year, but what was important was how everyone continued to work together to encourage, motivate and support each other."

Throughout the year, Roufs and the school wellness committee provide school staff with information and resources such as HONU educational materials, reimbursement for all or part of various community run and walk participation fees, and distribution of incentives such as bottled water, fruit and vegetable treats, yogurt parfaits and other promotional items.

"The Heart of New Ulm's information and materials have made it easier for us to provide quality wellness programs," said Roufs. "Everyone has personal wellness missions they have made for themselves and the project has made a way for us to help support our teachers and staff as they work toward their goals."



New Ulm Catholic Schools employees partnered with Peggy Kropinski, manager at McDonald's in New Ulm (shown holding upper right corner of poster) to learn how to make healthful choices at McDonald's. Kropinski provided weekly treats as incentives, such as apple walnut salads, yogurt parfaits and oatmeal and NUACS employees have been purchasing these healthy treats ever since!

# Local produce farmers embrace new opportunities; residents enjoy farmers markets and more



## Farmers market expansion

In 2012, as part of its work through a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant, HONU partnered with KNUJ Radio and the local farming community to expand the farmers market presence in New Ulm. The farmers market main location at Runnings parking lot started two weeks earlier than in past years and expanded its hours of operation. In addition, with approval from the New Ulm City Council, a new downtown farmers market opened for business on Monday afternoons, and all of the markets reported steady numbers of visitors.

## Community presentations

In May, community members enjoyed a free presentation sponsored by HONU on “Starting and Expanding Your Garden” with Lucinda Winch, Master Gardener. Throughout the summer, HONU offered free cooking demonstrations at the farmers markets along with a free educational booklet with tips to help people choose local, shop smart, and grow and prepare fruits and vegetables.

## Education, resources and networking for produce farmers

At presentations hosted by HONU, University of Minnesota staff helped teach local produce farmers about common agricultural food safety issues, treating water safely before and after harvests, writing a food safety plan and preparing for an agriculture audit process. Throughout the year, HONU helped promote local foods and farmers in the community at special events and worksites as part of the grant — all with the ultimate goal to expand production and consumption of local produce for better health.

“ At Alternative Roots Farm we strive to bring healthy choices, and greater awareness of the food we are consuming, to our community. As a small farmer, it is meaningful to have the support of our local health system — it has been great to partner with the Heart of New Ulm in building positive awareness and change. Having the Heart of New Ulm facilitate communication between local farmers has been a beneficial experience. ”

— Brooke Knisley  
Alternative Roots Farm



Top left: HONU cooking demonstration  
Top right: Local produce  
Bottom: Katy Hemberger from August Earth with her farm's products at a fall market

## Restaurants help make it easier to eat well when dining out

Data from a HONU survey of New Ulm households conducted in Summer 2012 show that on average, New Ulm residents eat at a restaurant for two meals a week. The results showed that people felt it was very important to have healthful choices available.



Dietitian Rebecca Fliszar with diners at Lola's Larkspur Market

### Restaurant program continues to expand

Through a partnership with The Heart of New Ulm Project that launched in the spring of 2011, many of New Ulm's fantastic restaurants have committed to helping people improve their heart health. In 2012, new restaurants continued to sign on for the program.

Participating restaurants are serving the same great-tasting food with fewer calories, more fruits and vegetables and more whole grains, and using healthier fats when cooking. Each restaurant's participation level — Bronze, Silver or Gold — is determined by the number of healthful practices they offer.

### Dine with a Dietitian events

In June 2012, HONU hosted a Mediterranean Dining Experience at Turner Hall that attracted more than 80 people to learn about a Mediterranean-style eating pattern and try new dishes. Throughout the summer of 2012, HONU continued its efforts to educate diners. A series of Dine with a Dietitian events offered people an opportunity to dine at various New Ulm restaurants with a HONU registered dietitian, who walked people through tips for eating out and choosing heart-healthier meals, shared how to make requests for healthful food and beverages and answered questions about nutrition.

“ I don't know when it seemed to be cost-effective to participate, but suddenly it was. We were starting to lose customers because we had this heavy meat-and-potato menu. When we started adding salads, I was blown away at how many we went through. It was like somebody flipped a switch. HONU has changed the town. ”

— Virginia Suker Moldan, manager at Turner Hall, as quoted in *EatingWell*

# Grocery stores, restaurants, and convenience stores help promote healthier SWAPs

## Small daily changes can add up to big changes in health

In September 2012, HONU launched the SWAP IT to DROP IT™ health communications campaign with funding from UnitedHealth Group. The campaign emphasized how making small eating changes — SWAPs to save 100 calories a day — can help people lose 10 pounds in a year.

Local businesses were very supportive:

- At **grocery stores**, HONU conducted ongoing educational store tours and free cooking demonstrations and provided signage to help give shoppers simple SWAP ideas.
- **Restaurants** displayed table tents or menu inserts with sample SWAPs, and also allotted space for SWAP IT Sweepstakes ballot boxes where diners could fill out an entry form to share their SWAP and be entered to win a prize.
- **Convenience stores** featured SWAP messaging on cooler door clings and floor decals.

The campaign also sought to increase the community's engagement with social media. Everyone in New Ulm was encouraged to get involved by visiting HONU's new Facebook page or following us on Twitter for additional motivational tips, promotions and inspiration.

The eight-month campaign featured billboards, full-page ads featuring stories on New Ulm residents and participation by two grocery stores, 13 restaurants and four convenience stores.

“ The Heart of New Ulm team does a tremendous job of educating our customers and employees by doing in-store and out-of-store demonstrations, as well as in-store tours. The store tours are especially helpful to our customers and employees because they teach people how to shop more healthfully, how to read nutrition labels and more. The demonstrations are usually very surprising to our customers and employees, because they show that healthful food can still taste great! We are thrilled by the partnership! ”

— Andrea Wendland, manager of perishables at Hy-Vee in New Ulm



## Community support and involvement stays strong



### Fifth Annual Community Summit

Community members of all ages attended our Annual Community Summit held in November, featuring motivational speaker Dan Gable, a World Champion and Olympic Champion wrestling legend. New Ulm native and two-time Olympic wrestler Ali Bernard also spoke, sharing her thoughts on motivation and the importance of social support.

### Holiday Trimmings program

In its fourth year, this eight-week program designed to help people prevent weight gain during the holiday season continued to prove popular. More than 500 people participated, either as part of the general community program for individuals or as part of the programs offered at 14 local worksites.

### SWAP IT to DROP IT Community Health Challenge

To complement the SWAP campaign (see opposite page) we launched the SWAP IT to DROP IT Community Health Challenge, which registered 497 participants. The challenge inspired people to make not only healthier food and beverage SWAPs, but also SWAPs to help them incorporate more physical activity and life balance into their day.

### Cooking show and community events

Residents continued to enthusiastically submit recipes and serve as guests on the “What’s Cooking, New Ulm?” TV show broadcast on NUCAT.

In many ways, the community continued to take ownership to ensure long-term sustainability of a community culture that values a heart-healthy lifestyle. As one example, in 2012 the Brown County Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention program took over organizing the Jingle Bell Jam 5K Walk/Run, which was originally started by The Heart of New Ulm Project.

Research data from our heart health screenings shows that residents with uncontrolled blood pressure in 2009 who participated in a Heart of New Ulm educational program of any kind (in the community, at work, through the clinic) were at least two times more likely to have their blood pressure under control by 2011 as those who did not participate in any of our activities.



Runners and walkers at the Jingle Bell Jam in December 2012. Photo credit *New Ulm Journal*.

## Health care providers and phone coaches partner to help patients at highest risk

### HeartBeat Connections

In its second year, the HeartBeat Connections program continued helping people who are at high risk for heart disease or those who have diabetes or heart disease.

Through monthly phone coaching sessions, people are encouraged to improve risk factors that could lead to a heart attack. The program is free to New Ulm residents and selects individuals to participate based on data from their electronic health record, as well as referrals from primary care providers.

The program is a great way to provide people with supplemental education and support in-between their regular office visits with their primary care provider. Participants receive monthly 20 to 30-minute phone calls where they and their coach talk one-on-one about their progress in the last month and make plans for the month ahead.

Results show promising success with the program. One evaluation done in 2012 compared HeartBeat Connections participants with eligible residents who chose not to participate in the program. People who participated in the program were more likely to achieve healthy cholesterol, blood pressure and triglyceride levels than those who didn't participate.

In 2012, through Allina's Advanced Training Program, a team of HONU staff, along with New Ulm Medical Center's medical director, completed a quality improvement project that resulted in the creation of a workflow that better enables providers to refer patients into the program.

Starting in mid-2013, weight management phone coaching will be offered to community residents age 18 and older who are overweight with a Body Mass Index above 30 and are also participating in the LOSE IT to WIN IT community health challenge.

**At the end of 2012, health care providers had referred more than 500 patients into HeartBeat Connections, demonstrating strong support of the program.**

### Professional education for providers

Through two Grand Rounds educational events in 2012, health care providers had the opportunity to hear presentations from national experts on cholesterol management and coronary artery calcium scoring.



The HeartBeat Connections team:  
Theresa Bunkers-Lawson, RN, CDE  
Joy Hayes, MS, RD, CDE  
Kate Callahan Schmitz, RD  
Gretchen Benson, RD, CDE  
Julie Long, NP

## Judy Rathmann gains knowledge, increases activity and makes food SWAPs for success

New Ulm resident Judy Rathmann leads a busy life volunteering at her church, where she provides meals, acts in congregational plays, and participates in a prayer group. She recently volunteered as an election judge and enjoys walking, playing cards, Sudoku, reading, traveling and spending time with family and friends.

Before retiring, Rathmann, 69, worked for the local school district. As a substitute paraprofessional, she clearly understands that learning is a process that requires persistence, patience and being open to new ideas. She now uses some of the same concepts she shared with her students to improve her personal heart health and overall personal wellness.

“I’m not dieting. I’m becoming more educated,” said Rathmann. “It’s a process and I’m patient with myself as I try new things to find what works for me. If I have a setback, I don’t consider it a failure but an opportunity. I tell myself that what I tried didn’t work for me, but I know that I will find other things that will.”

Rathmann explained, “My husband and I both went to the heart health screenings (that the Heart of New Ulm Project conducted). “We liked the idea of checking to see where we were with our health.” She decided it was a good time to see what she could learn about her health – specifically about how to get her blood pressure and cholesterol at healthy levels and add more fiber to her diet. She chose to participate in the HeartBeat Connections phone coaching program offered by HONU.

“The program has worked well for me and my phone coach has been so supportive and encouraging,” said Rathmann. One year into it, she is happy to say that she feels more knowledgeable about exercise and nutrition and that her overall health has improved.



Judy Rathmann on one of her regular walks

“Before, I would occasionally go for a walk, but it was sporadic. Now, I schedule it on my calendar and strive to walk five days a week for a total of 150 minutes,” stated Rathmann. “I had tried lots of diets in the past, but they set me up for failure. Over the last year I’ve lost 10 pounds, started to eat more fiber, and my blood pressure and cholesterol numbers are where they should be. I know there’s always more that I can do, but right now I feel great!”

Rathmann says that the past year has been an educational journey for her. “There were so many things to try. I now eat seven servings of fruits and vegetables a day, have slowly swapped portions of healthier olive oil for regular cooking oil, keep a jar of almonds in the car to eat instead of stopping for fast food, eat more shrimp and tuna and less beef, and have cut back on my bread portions.” She has gone from drinking one can of soda a day to consuming just one or two cans a week, now drinks eight glasses of water a day, and has found that she enjoys cold and hot tea.

“It’s a learning process,” said Rathmann. “I have increased my activity and made food exchanges. By taking it one step at a time and not worrying about my weight, I’ve learned how to make healthier choices that are now part of my daily life. Once you learn that you can do it, you’ll never want to go back.”

## Sherry Glass improves her blood pressure, cholesterol, weight — and her life

In December 2009, New Ulm resident Sherry Glass experienced an excruciating headache and felt intense pressure at the back of her head. Her husband took her to the emergency room at New Ulm Medical Center and she was subsequently rushed to Abbott Northwestern Hospital. She would later learn that she had suffered a subarachnoid hemorrhage stroke, a trauma from which only 20 percent of people reach full recovery. Today, Glass is doing well and is eager to share her story of awareness, recovery and hope.



Sherry Glass, right, met her phone coach Kate Callahan Schmitz in person at the Fifth Annual Community Summit

said Glass. “I also never wanted to need to take medication to manage my blood pressure,” admitted Glass. “It wasn’t something I ever wanted to rely on, but I’ve learned that sometimes our bodies need a little help.”

Slowing down has never been an option for Glass. For the past 10 years, she has worked at MRCL in New Ulm as a counselor for adults with disabilities. “Even when I decide to retire, I always want to be doing something,” said Glass.

“I was relatively healthy throughout high school and college,” said Glass. “Then, at age 24 when I was pregnant with my daughter, I learned that I had high blood pressure. At the time, my doctor and I attributed it to the excitement of the pregnancy, but I now know that it should have been my first warning sign.”

Throughout the coming years, Glass would continue to have high blood pressure readings. At the highest, she says it was 180/100. A normal blood pressure reading is less than 120/80.

“I had untreated high blood pressure for most of my life and when added to a family genetic factor that increased my risk, it resulted in the brain aneurysm. The blood vessels at the back of my brain swelled with blood, which caused the terrible pressure and headache, and then it finally burst.”

After the aneurysm, Glass began looking for ways to manage her blood pressure and avoid future medical complications. She was invited to participate in HONU’s HeartBeat Connections program and started working with a phone coach.

“I’ve found that I don’t need to give up eating the foods I love; I just need to cut back on portions,”

She and her husband enjoy cooking together and Glass says that she makes it a priority to use her Leslie Sansone DVD walking tapes five mornings a week. “After nine months, I’ve lost some weight, lowered my cholesterol and now have normal blood pressure readings,” said Glass. “I’m not competitive, just an average person doing what I need to do to take care of myself.”

A little over three years after her surgery, an optimistic attitude continues to help Glass, 65, turn her experience into something positive. “The experience has changed my life and I want to encourage others to be aware of their genetic history and help them understand the dangers and risks of having untreated high blood pressure,” explained Glass.

While spending 17 days in intensive care and then four days in physical and occupational therapy, she recovered and learned to walk all over again because of muscle atrophy. “I determined that I had two choices to make,” expressed Glass. “Either I could take what I learned and gained through the experience to help myself and others, or I could have a ‘poor me’ attitude. I want to use the experience for something good. I have always wanted to help people and here I am, in a position to do so.”

# Top 10 ways you can take action

## 1 Find social support to help you reach your health goals.

- The buddy system works! Buddies can be coworkers, family members, friends and others. The more you surround yourself with people who support your goals, the greater your chances for success.

## 2 Aim for wellness at work.

- Get involved in wellness at your worksite by championing or supporting wellness policies such as a tobacco-free worksite or healthier vending.
- Start a wellness committee or participate on an established wellness committee.
- Participate in programs or events sponsored by the wellness committee.
- Get up from your desk or work station and move your body for three minutes every hour! Try a walking meeting where possible.

## 3 Make healthier food choices at local restaurants, the grocery store or the convenience store.

- Small changes add up. By saving just 100 calories every day, you can lose 10 pounds and help improve your overall health. For ideas, visit our website at [www.heartsbeatback.org](http://www.heartsbeatback.org) and click on SWAP IT to DROP IT under the FoodWorks tab.

## 4 Watch our “What’s Cooking New Ulm?” TV show.

- For a schedule of showtimes, visit the City of New Ulm website at [www.ci.new-ulm.mn.us](http://www.ci.new-ulm.mn.us) and click on NUCAT in the menu bar on the left to access the station’s program schedule.
- To watch past episodes, visit our YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/HeartofNewUlm](http://www.youtube.com/user/HeartofNewUlm)

## 5 Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter!

- Be inspired by heart-health tips, hear the most up-to-date heart-health research, and stay updated on the latest happenings with The Heart of New Ulm Project.



[Facebook.com/HeartOfNewUlm](https://www.facebook.com/HeartOfNewUlm)



Twitter: @heartofnewulm



## Top 10 ways you can take action, *continued*

### 6 Take advantage of the many resources on the Heart of New Ulm Project's website at [www.heartsbeatback.org](http://www.heartsbeatback.org).

- Read our blog and get ideas and inspiration to help you enjoy a heart-healthy lifestyle.
- View helpful educational videos, including our Home Pantry Makeover, Grocery Store Tour and Mini Home Workout. Click on Videos under the Learn tab.
- Access delicious, heart-healthy recipes. Click on Recipes under the FoodWorks tab.
- Read the success stories associated with the Heart of New Ulm Project and get motivated. Click on the Success Stories tab.

### 7 Champion or support the development and adoption of public policies that support a healthful lifestyle.

- Over the next few years, HONU will be working with key decision makers on a local and regional level to encourage the adoption of policies that support an environment for healthful lifestyles. Our goal is to make sure the community can keep the momentum going. If you're interested in learning more or finding out how you can help, contact The Heart of New Ulm Project office at 507.217.5945. Examples of policies the project's steering committee would like to see adopted include:

- **Tobacco-free parks:** discourage the use of tobacco where our kids play
- **Complete Streets resolution:** encourage walking and biking as forms of transportation
- **Healthier vending:** provide healthier options in addition to the traditional options in vending machines

### 8 Visit the farmers market for tasty, fresh produce.

- Seasonal farmers markets are held in the parking lots at Runnings Farm & Fleet, 1615 N. State St. and at the Marktplatz Mall, 101 N. German St. When you buy local, you get the highest quality produce and support our local farmers, too!

### 9 Participate in the new Community Health Challenge — LOSE IT to WIN IT: *Weigh in, New Ulm.*

- Get involved to support our community and most importantly, to work toward a healthier, improved you. You'll be able to participate at work or home as an individual, family or worksite team. If we get enough people to register for the challenge and complete it, we'll earn a great community prize — \$100,000 worth of new outdoor fitness equipment for our New Ulm parks and bike improvements such as bike racks, bike lanes and signage!

### 10 Take care of your health — you are the only one who can!

- By making small changes over time, you'll help to ensure lasting change and better health.



## Our 2012 Steering Committee

Kathleen Backer, New Ulm Medical Center  
Foundation Board  
Jim Bartels, KNUJ-SAM Radio  
Deb Beatty, New Ulm Medical Center  
Dan Beranek, Alliance Bank  
Bob Beussman, , Mayor, City of New Ulm  
Carisa Buegler, New Ulm Medical Center  
Jenny Eckstein, New Ulm Chamber of Commerce  
Bruce Fenske, New Ulm Journal  
Dennis Frederickson, State Senator  
Marj Frederickson, New Ulm Medical Center  
Board of Trustees  
Toby Freier, New Ulm Medical Center  
Amy Furth, New Ulm community member  
Jean Geistfeld, Citizens Bank Minnesota  
Dan Groebner, MD, New Ulm Medical Center  
John Gronholz, Martin Luther College  
Tom Henderson, Brown County Family Services  
Rachel Hoffman, Minnesota Valley Testing Labs

Sue Hogen, New Ulm community member  
Cheryl Kormann, City of New Ulm Park & Recreation  
Joan Krikava, MD, New Ulm Medical Center  
Carol Laitinen, New Ulm community member  
Dixie Moorman, Minnesota Valley Testing Labs  
Karen Moritz, Brown County Public Health  
Keri Parish, Kraft Foods  
Leah Peck, J&R Schugel Trucking  
Timothy Plath, Minnesota Valley Lutheran School  
Harold Remme, District #88 Schools  
Peter Roufs, New Ulm Area Catholic Schools  
Kathy Runck, New Ulm Medical Center  
Tom Schmitz, City of New Ulm Park & Recreation  
Audra Shaneman, New Ulm Chamber of Commerce  
Carsa Spaude, Parker Hannifin  
Jane Steinke, New Ulm Area Catholic Schools  
Verna Walters, 3M  
Lori Weinberg, Windings Inc.

## The Heart of New Ulm Project Team

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Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation  
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Healthcare Research & Innovation  
Charles Stephens, MD, New Ulm Medical Center  
Cindy Winters, New Ulm Medical Center

**For first heart attacks, 90 percent are attributable to nine risk factors that people can change: smoking, physical inactivity, not eating enough fruits and vegetables, obesity, uncontrolled blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, uncontrolled blood glucose, uncontrolled stress, and not taking medication properly.** *Source: The INTERHEART Study*

## Serving as a community catalyst and resource is some of our most important work every day



Toby Freier

Over the past several years, The Heart of New Ulm Project has become sort of a fabric of our community, with its impact being seen everywhere you go and with most people you talk to in New Ulm.

Leaders from our schools, businesses, city government, nonprofits

and public health have all embraced the project and shared goal to improve the health of our community. Four years after the project started, attendance and engagement at our quarterly community steering committee meetings has never been better. I think that speaks volumes about the buy-in and importance our community has placed on a true partnership to improve our health.

We also are benefiting from strong support from our physicians and health care team at New Ulm Medical Center. Our physicians play a key role in advocating for the Heart of New Ulm's services and the impact they can make in improving the health of our patients and community.

Together, all of this involvement is critical to achieve our goal, as we know our health care and HONU teams can't do it on their own. Some of the most important work they do every day is to serve as a catalyst and resource for helping the broader New Ulm community take ownership in the efforts to improve the community's health.

We are indeed seeing success. When we compare the heart health of the community today to 2009, we have experienced improvements in biometric risk factors for heart attacks, such as blood pressure and cholesterol. When we look at lifestyle behaviors that impact heart attacks, we're also making progress there, as residents are getting more physical

activity and eating more fruits and vegetables. In addition, we've seen rates of obesity stabilize in our community and data shows that we are actually seeing a small weight decrease, despite the fact that we tend to gain weight as we age.

It was rewarding to have the U.S. Surgeon General visit our community in 2012 and to share with her more about what we are doing. Honestly, I have been surprised over the years to learn how unique the Heart of New Ulm Project is not only in Minnesota, but across the United States. Due to its innovative nature, there has been a lot of interest from around the country on how our project is going

and what can be applied in other communities. As shown on the opposite page, the impressive list of publications and presentations that the HONU team was involved with in 2012 shows how we are helping spread information to the broader health community about what strategies are proving the most successful.

As we approach the halfway point of our 10-year project, let's continue to build upon our success and ensure

that many of the programs and services offered today become part of our ongoing commitment. As health reform continues to take hold, many of the innovative services we offer today will be needed and supported and we are striving to continue down this path of testing new models and services.

Thanks to everyone in New Ulm for your ongoing support and willingness to take action — not only to improve your own health, but that of our entire community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toby Freier".

Toby Freier  
President, New Ulm Medical Center,  
part of Allina Health

Let's continue to build upon our success and ensure that many of the programs and services offered today become part of our ongoing commitment.

## 2012 publications and presentations

- “Higher Optimal Lifestyle Score is Associated with Greater Workplace Productivity.” Authors: Jackie L. Boucher, Jeffrey J. VanWormer, Heather R. Britt, James M. Peacock, Kevin J. Graham. Presented at the Epidemiology and Prevention/Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism 2012 Scientific Sessions, March 13-16, 2012, San Diego.
- “Reduced Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors and Risk Biomarkers From a Population-Based Intervention: The Heart of New Ulm Project, Two-year Results.” Authors: Thomas Knicklebine, Jackie Boucher, Abbey Sidebottom, Raquel F. Pereira, Betsy Pieser, Arthur Sillah, Craig Strauss, Charles Stephens. Presented at the American College of Cardiology 61st Annual Scientific Session and ACC-i2 with TCT, March 24-27, 2012, Chicago.
- “Holiday Trimmings Program Helps Participants Manage Weight during the Holiday Season.” Authors: Holly S. Glaubitz, Raquel F. Pereira, Jackie Boucher Abbey Sidebottom, Arthur Sillah. Presented at the Art and Science of Health Promotion Conference, April 11-15, 2012, San Diego.
- “Use of Electronic Health Record Data and Tools to Help Implement and Evaluate The Heart of New Ulm Project.” Presented by Abbey Sidebottom, Gretchen Benson and Tamara Winden at the 2012 Minnesota Health Information Management Association Annual Meeting, April 25, 2012.
- “Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project – Engaging a Community in Prevention.” Presented by Gretchen Benson and Julie Long at the Minneapolis, St. Paul Diabetes Educators Annual Conference, May 4, 2012.
- “Behavioral Approaches to Increase Intake of Whole Grains.” Presented by Raquel Pereira at the Whole Grains Summit, May 21, 2012, Minneapolis.
- “Biometric Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors and Workplace Productivity Loss.” Authors: Raquel F. Pereira, Jeffrey J. VanWormer, Jackie L. Boucher, Heather R. Britt and James M. Peacock. Presented at the Annual Conference of the International Society for Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (ISBNPA), May 23-26, 2012, Austin, Tex.
- “Phone-based Prevention Program Improves Biometric and Cardiometabolic Risk Outcomes.” Authors: Gretchen Benson, Abbey Sidebottom, Jackie Boucher, Julie Long, Charles Stephens, Thomas Knicklebine. Presented at the American Diabetes Association 72nd Scientific Sessions, June 8-12, 2012, Philadelphia.
- “The Heart of New Ulm Project: Using Community-Based Cardiometabolic Risk Factor Screenings in a Rural Population Health Improvement Initiative.” Authors: Jeffrey J. VanWormer, Pamela Jo Johnson, Raquel F. Pereira, Jackie L. Boucher, Heather R. Britt, Charles W. Stephens, N. Marcus Thygeson, and Kevin J. Graham, *Population Health Management*, Volume 15, Number 0, June 2012.
- “Cardiovascular Risk Factor Screening Satisfaction in the Heart of New Project.” Authors: Wobo Bekwelem, Jeffrey J. VanWormer, Jackie L. Boucher, Raquel F. Pereira. *Clinical Medicine & Research*, volume 10, Number 1, 1-6, 2012.
- HONU presented three posters during a poster session as part of “Healthy Minnesota: Communities in Action” at the Minnesota Public Health Association Meeting, Sept. 28, 2012, Bloomington, Minn.



To view papers and conference posters, visit [www.heartsbeatback.org](http://www.heartsbeatback.org) and click on Research Publications and Presentations in the lower right-hand corner of our home page.



hearts**beat**back  
THE HEART OF NEW ULM PROJECT

Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is a collaborative partnership of Allina Health, the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation, the New Ulm Medical Center and the community of New Ulm.

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