



Year One Report to the Community



The Heart of New Ulm project is a 10-year initiative designed to reduce, and eventually eliminate, heart attacks in New Ulm. This means helping residents improve their health risks in areas such as physical activity, nutrition, obesity or tobacco use, among others. The project involves community education, medical interventions and environmental changes.



Photo courtesy of J&R Schugel Trucking

Foreword

It's said you are never a prophet in your own land. But if you're reading this in New Ulm and are aware of the Heart of New Ulm project, you are seeing the future not only of preventive health care delivery, but also possibly how and where companies will choose to locate.



Kevin Graham, MD

Year one of the Heart of New Ulm project is history. Starting with the aggressive, life-saving goal to eliminate death from heart attacks in the 56073 zip code over the next decade and to secondarily make New Ulm the healthiest city in America, we have taken great strides in a short time. Nearly 5,200 adults have been screened, making this the most successful community heart health screening program in history. The people of New Ulm have embraced many opportunities for change, the physicians of the New Ulm Medical Center have welcomed new technologies and the entire community has learned many new things.

This report details the data we've collected, some of the successes we've enjoyed, the challenges that lie ahead and our initiatives for 2010. While we have come far with great support, the coming months are crucial for us. We must implement community-wide health changes as well as individualized and aggressive preventive measures for those who are at highest risk for heart attacks. In just this first year, the rate at which heart attacks occur has decreased by more than 10 percent in New Ulm. We expect even greater things in the coming years.

We invite your comments, ideas and support. The nation is starting to watch New Ulm. Large insurers and companies are looking to see if the changes we are embracing will lead to cheaper health care costs in the region — one company has even inquired about moving a branch here based on potential health care cost savings.

Our 10-year journey is unfolding in an exciting way. The opportunities for each citizen and for the entire community are enormous. Be a prophet. Predict your future. Join with your friends and neighbors in the Heart of New Ulm project. The life saved may be your own and your collective efforts will make New Ulm the envy of the country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Graham".

Kevin Graham, MD
Heart of New Ulm medical director
New Ulm cardiologist and president of the Minneapolis Heart Institute



“I visited New Ulm to see what these folks are doing, how determined they are to make changes in their lifestyles. This dedication to prevention and wellness will keep individuals in New Ulm living longer, healthier lives. It will also save the health care system about \$10 million over the next 10 years. When it comes to wellness, self-interest and the national interest are aligned.”

— U.S. Senator Al Franken from Minnesota as quoted in the *New Ulm Journal*

2009 Objectives and Progress

The Heart of New Ulm (HONU) project was officially launched with the first community heart health screening held at Martin Luther College in April 2009. The partnership between Allina Hospitals & Clinics, the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation, New Ulm Medical Center and New Ulm community leaders and residents flourished. New Ulm community leaders, residents and health care providers all developed a strong sense of ownership in the project and participated enthusiastically in helping us achieve a successful first year.

The project's basic objectives in 2009 were to build capacity, maintain relationships and assess the heart health of the community.

Our objective:

What we've done to accomplish it:

- Establish ongoing dialogue with two key project advisory panels: 1) Community leaders through the HONU Community Steering Committee and 2) Regional scientists through the HONU Scientific Advisory Board.

The HONU Community Steering Committee met quarterly throughout 2009, with high attendance by members and a high degree of input and discussion on proposed project activities. The HONU Scientific Advisory Board met as a full group twice in 2009 to assist the project planners in developing a 10-year research and evaluation plan. The large group has since been split into subspecialty advisory groups that continue to meet on an ad hoc basis during key project planning phases to provide advice on intervention activities.

- Create a comprehensive heart health screening infrastructure, connected to the electronic health record, and delivered on demand in various community settings (versus a clinic).

Support for the screening effort has been successfully coordinated through various other departments at the New Ulm Medical Center, including the laboratory and electronic health record teams, among others. Allina Hospitals & Clinics' communications and information technology teams have provided strong support and were instrumental in helping build the screening infrastructure.

- Engage as many adult individuals as possible to participate in a HONU heart health screening.

5,198 people participated in a HONU heart health screening in 2009.

- Offer basic heart health education programs to community residents.

More than 1,000 people participated in at least one heart health education seminar, worksite lunch-and-learn lecture or other community health improvement event.

2009 by the numbers:

- 5,198:** Number of people who had a free heart health screening
- 3,901:** Number of people who enrolled in the *Move to Improve* community physical activity challenge program
- 1,000+:** Number of people who attended at least one community health education seminar, worksite lunch-and-learn lecture or other community health improvement event
- 109:** Number of screening events held at worksites, New Ulm Medical Center, community centers, recreation centers and churches
- 62:** Number of employers or civic organizations that participated in a screening and/or wellness planning activity (including 20 of New Ulm's 25 largest employers)

Looking ahead

Building on the successes of our first year, we are ready to move forward with the challenges that lie ahead. Based on New Ulm's unique health profile as well as input from community leaders, we've developed a solid program for the Heart of New Ulm's second year. By prioritizing and setting our resources in motion, along with expanding our support from New Ulm community leaders, we will achieve success in helping people make positive, heart-healthy lifestyle changes.





“We can work hard and we can create exchanges and reform insurance and work on Medicare payments and things that need to get done, but true savings are going to come when we do the preventative measures that improve peoples’ lives and that hit closest to home. That’s how we’re going to contain costs.”

— Minnesota First District Congressman Tim Walz on the Heart of New Ulm project, as quoted in the *New Ulm Journal*

Why New Ulm?

The Heart of New Ulm project is being led by Allina Hospitals & Clinics. Allina’s Center for Healthcare Innovation researches new care models and treatments to transform health and health care and advance Allina’s strategic vision to improve patient care. The Center also serves as a catalyst for change in health care locally and nationally. The Center selected the New Ulm area as the site for the Heart of New Ulm project for two primary reasons:

1 The vast majority of citizens get their medical care from a centralized provider — the New Ulm Medical Center. Because of this, it is easier to track the health of the community over time by examining the New Ulm Medical Center’s electronic health records.

2 New Ulm’s demographics and risk factors for heart disease, along with its vibrant economy comprised of various businesses and industry, made it an optimal location to test and measure the success of the project so that it can be replicated in other communities. In addition, the city cited “improving the health of the community” as one of its top three priorities at a recent community retreat.

Nestled about 90 miles southwest of the Twin Cities in Brown County, New Ulm is in the heart of southern Minnesota’s agricultural belt and the scenic Minnesota River valley.

According to the latest census estimates, there are 17,199 residents in the 56073 zip code, with 13,594 living within the New Ulm city limits. The gender split is nearly equal between males and females. The average New Ulm resident is 38 years old and adults account for about three-quarters of the entire population. Ninety-seven percent of residents identify themselves as white and about 20 percent report obtaining a bachelor’s degree or higher education level. Six percent of residents fall below the poverty line.

Relative to the rest of Minnesota, the New Ulm population is slightly older, has a slightly higher proportion of married residents, a lower proportion of residents with a college education, and is less racially diverse. Relative to greater Minnesota (i.e., outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area), the size of the New Ulm population is more stable year to year, but is similar across most all demographic characteristics.

SouthPoint Federal Credit Union: “Steppin’ Up” to Support Individual Wellness



Pizza is out and healthy eating is in at SouthPoint Federal Credit Union. As part of its new wellness program, granola bars and fresh fruit are now the healthy options on the table for morning events, while training lunches feature healthy fixings for make-your-own sandwiches.

At SouthPoint Federal Credit Union, management knows that numbers can tell a lot about the health of an organization. So when they received their summary report from the Heart of New Ulm with the results from their May 2009 employee heart health screening, the numbers sent a clear message.

“After seeing the report, we knew we really needed to get involved with this,” said Brian Serbus, manager for SouthPoint’s New Ulm branch. “Helping our employees improve their heart health is good for everyone.”

With 57 employees across three Minnesota branches — Sleepy Eye and Springfield as well as New Ulm — a total of 49 employees and spouses participated in the screening. Angie Pidde, SouthPoint’s training coordinator, said the turnout was “more than we ever expected,” but that the results were “a bit of a surprise.”

“Fifty-three percent of our screening participants had high cholesterol and our obesity rate was 76 percent,” explained Pidde. “We also scored quite low on fruit and vegetable consumption — only about 2 percent of us actually eat five or more fruits or vegetables a day.”

Pidde, whose role also now includes worksite wellness, said the management team was also surprised to learn that, based on employees’ responses to the screening’s lifestyle questions, the HONU report calculated they could potentially be losing an estimated \$152,000 annually in health-related productivity loss.

On the positive side, SouthPoint leaders were pleased with results showing that 86 percent of their employees reported a normal stress level and more than 57 percent were getting adequate physical activity every week.

“Steppin’ Up” to support employees

SouthPoint did not have an existing wellness program at the time of the HONU screening. After reviewing the summary report with the credit union’s CEO, they knew they needed to “step up” and support their staff to make some healthy lifestyle changes.

With the help of Holly Glaubitz, a HONU health educator and wellness coordinator, SouthPoint created a yearlong wellness program called Steppin’ Up. Every employee was assigned to one of five color-coded teams comprised of 11 to 12 employees. Each team is responsible for coordinating a month-long campaign around a specific health topic twice a year.

During the campaign, team members coordinate activities, send weekly messages via email and post information on the organization’s Intranet. The weekly messages focus on awareness and reminding people of simple things they can do, such as drinking eight glasses of water each day or tracking if they are eating enough vegetables each day. Everyone wears their brightly colored team T-shirts on Fridays to also help show their pride in wellness to the community.

Although the program approach requires all employees to participate as part of a team, the focus remains centered on the individual.

Pidde stressed, “We are not telling employees what they have to do — they are choosing their own individual goals. The program is customizable to each individual and that’s helped us get more buy-in.”

HONU support and resources go a long way

In addition to the monthly campaigns, the Steppin’ Up program started a walking program in the fall of 2009, with an initial focus on counting steps. The program then progressed into conditioning for New Ulm’s Jingle Bell Jam, a four-mile walk/run race held in December in which more than 21 employees from all three branches participated.

SouthPoint also successfully implemented HONU’s *Holiday Trimmings*, an eight-week program designed to help employees maintain their weight during the holidays.

Pidde explained, “Without the Heart of New Ulm as a resource, I don’t know how far we would have been able to go with our wellness program. They really provided a support system to make us accountable.”

To complement the Steppin’ Up program, SouthPoint also made significant changes in their food choices for training events. They had previously made food choices with ease in mind, never really considering the health aspect.

At an educational worksite summit organized by HONU, Pidde said they learned that, “If you are going to give them options to eat, give them at least a healthy option. Otherwise, if you just order pizza, you are sending them a message that they can be unhealthy.”

Formula for success

At an organizational level, SouthPoint has set six goals either to maintain or enhance their scores from the initial HONU screening. They plan to repeat some of the screening tests to determine in which heart health risk areas they are making progress, as well as where they can still improve.

Now that they have taken the first steps with a wellness program and have the support of management, Serbus and Pidde are optimistic they can maintain an ongoing commitment.

“I think that consciously we are making wellness more of a habit,” said Pidde. “It’s not just something that’s out there where we say ‘hey, maybe we will work on this for this month or next month.’ If this (a focus on wellness) is going to be a part of who we are, we know we need to keep talking about our key areas. It’s the consistency of focusing on them every month that will make the difference.”

She added, “People are bringing information back to their families and to their communities and saying, ‘hey this is a great program.’ It’s exciting for us to be participating in it and everybody is really enjoying it.”

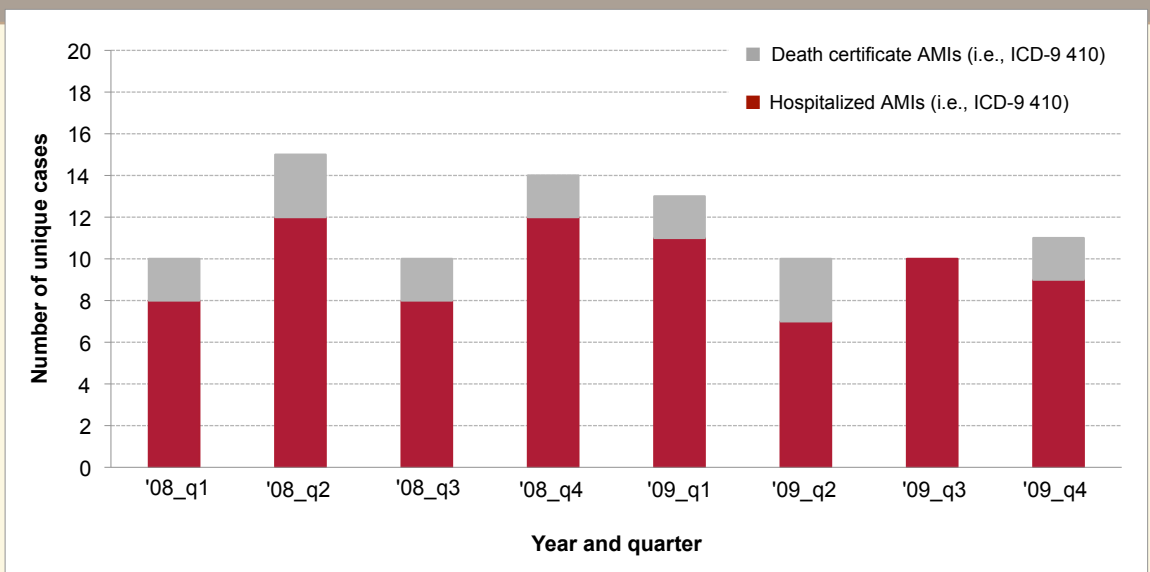
The Heart Health of the New Ulm Community

Heart attack frequency

A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to part of the heart muscle is stopped.

- Heart attacks are the leading cause of death in the United States and they affect more than one million Americans each year.
- Women account for nearly half of all heart attack deaths. Between the ages of 40 and 60, as many women die from heart disease as breast cancer. Over a lifetime, heart disease kills five times as many women as breast cancer.
- Heart attacks are the number two cause of death in Minnesota (a very close second only to cancer).
- Minnesota consistently ranks among the top three states in the country for having the lowest heart attack death rate, with Brown County ranking 18th best of all 87 Minnesota counties according to state health department records.
- Each year, in the 56073 zip code, between 24 and 46 people ages 40 to 79 will have a heart attack. Between three and nine of these people will die from their heart attack. The graph below outlines the recent trend in heart attacks among residents in the 56073 zip code.

Heart attacks (acute myocardial infarctions or AMIs)
among 56073 residents, by quarter in 2008 and 2009



Risk factors for heart attacks

Although reducing heart attacks is the main outcome that the Heart of New Ulm project aims to improve, the short-term goals of the project are to improve the risk factors that cause heart attacks. These risk factors include high LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, high blood pressure, uncontrolled glucose, overweight/obesity and smoking. We must improve these risk factors first in order to achieve our larger goal. Approximately eight out of 10 deaths from heart attacks can be prevented when people take steps to live a healthier lifestyle.

The first year of the Heart of New Ulm project was primarily dedicated to determining the heart attack risk factor profile of the entire 56073 zip code. We accomplished this by conducting a mass community screening initiative to measure heart attack risk factors on as many adult residents as possible.

Over an eight-month period in 2009, HONU conducted 109 screening events at various venues. Screenings were open to everyone, but primarily targeted to residents in the 56073 zip code who were 40–79 years old, because

that is the age where preventable heart attacks are most likely to occur. Of the estimated 7,000 eligible people in that target population, 3,175 (45 percent) participated in a screening.

Specifically, the screening assessed the following risk factors that people can improve:

- **Blood markers:** Total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, triglycerides, C-reactive protein, blood glucose
- **Biometrics:** Blood pressure, body weight
- **Behaviors:** Smoking, physical activity level, fruit/vegetable consumption, stress level, heart disease medication adherence

At the completion of the screening, each participant received a Heart of New Ulm Lifestyle Score, calculated from their Body Mass Index, tobacco use, alcohol use, fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity level. The higher the score, the more optimal the person’s lifestyle choices and the healthier they are likely to be. The chart on the following page summarizes the overall screening results.



The Heart of New Ulm sponsored the Jingle Bell Jam 4-mile walk/run on December 12, 2009, which attracted more than 600 people.

Photo courtesy of the New Ulm Journal



Heart attack risk factors	Frequency among HONU screening participants (n=3,175 ages 40–79)	Frequency among U.S. adult population
Blood markers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High total cholesterol (≥ 200 mg/dL) • High LDL cholesterol (≥ 130 mg/dL) • Low HDL cholesterol (< 40 [men] or < 50 [women] mg/dL) • High triglycerides (≥ 150 mg/dL) • High c-reactive protein (> 3 mg/L) • High blood glucose (≥ 100 mg/dL) 	<p style="text-align: center;">49%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">37%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">28%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">31%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">30%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">33%</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">47%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">32%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">25%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">31%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">30%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">34%</p>
Biometrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood pressure ($\geq 140/90$ mm/Hg) • Obese body mass index (≥ 30 kg/m²) 	<p style="text-align: center;">27%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">40%</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">29%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">34%</p>
Behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cigarette smoker (yes) • Low physical activity level (< 150 minutes/week) • Low fruit/vegetable consumption (< 5 servings/day) • High stress (≥ 8 points on stress score) • Heart medication non-adherence ($< 100\%$ adherence as prescribed) 	<p style="text-align: center;">9%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">35%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">82%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">11%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">34% (of those who take heart medication)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">20%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">N/A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">75%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">N/A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">N/A</p>

N/A: Data not available

Sources: Heart of New Ulm project screening data; National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

New Ulm's community diagnosis

Risk factors for heart attack affect many people. Some risk factors, such as overweight/obesity, are particularly high in the New Ulm target population compared with state and national estimates of the assessed risk factors.

- In New Ulm, 36 percent of adults have metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome is when a person has at least three of the following risk factors: abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, low HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides or high blood glucose. A person can develop any of the risk factors for heart attack by itself, but some tend to occur together.
- Of those who are at the highest risk for a heart attack, 33 percent don't use any sort of preventive medical therapy, such as daily aspirin or anti-cholesterol medication.
- Based on these screening results, the most important *lifestyle* issues we need to work on are helping people manage their weight and increase the amount of fruits and vegetables they eat. Working together as a community, we can help create an environment that promotes these lifestyle changes and helps everyone succeed in their efforts.
- The most important *medical* issues we need to work on are helping people decrease their LDL cholesterol, decrease the high rate of metabolic syndrome and where appropriate, increase their use of preventive medical therapies, such as aspirin and cholesterol medication.

Does Employee Health = Wealth?

Average workplace productivity loss (i.e., absenteeism plus presenteeism) due to health reasons cost local employers about \$2,500 per employee per year in New Ulm. Multiplied by the entire New Ulm working population, this equates to a drain of over \$20 million each year on the New Ulm economy.

However, the 10 percent of employees who:

- do not smoke,
- are not overweight,
- eat at least five fruits/vegetables per day,
- consume less than 15 alcoholic drinks per week, and
- get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week

cost employers less than half as much (approximately \$1,225) in annual productivity losses.



Based on employees' responses to the screening's lifestyle questions, the HONU report calculates for employers how much they could be losing on an annual basis in health-related productivity.

Pictured here: Employees from SouthPoint Federal Credit Union participated in the Jingle Bell Jam 4-mile walk/run. With the help of the Heart of New Ulm, SouthPoint successfully implemented an employee wellness program.

Photo courtesy of SouthPoint Federal Credit Union

Jeff Gulden: A Public Commitment Helping Him Succeed

As co-owner of the popular B&L Bar in New Ulm and a well-known leader in the community, Jeff Gulden knew people would give him a hard time when the newspaper came out. To help promote the Heart of New Ulm's heart health screenings, the New Ulm native had agreed to be featured in an ad campaign talking about his own resolve to make healthy changes.

The New Ulm Journal ads showed a photo of Gulden, 43, along with a quote explaining how he felt the screening was "a good wake-up call." The quote continued, "I need to do something about my weight. I am going to try to exercise more, eat more sensibly and eat smaller amounts of food."

Explained Gulden, "My wife said, 'You know, Jeff, if you're going in the paper, you're really going to have put your mind to losing weight and making changes.' I knew I was really going to be held accountable. I was really scared about having my picture taken and out there, but thought, well, hopefully this is the thing that's going to help motivate me."

His wife Lisa had encouraged him to do the screening and he'd long known he needed to be healthier. In addition to carrying some extra weight, Gulden is on medication for both high blood pressure and cholesterol. His doctor had continually been stressing the need for him to make changes.



With a history of heart disease in his family, Jeff Gulden has taken steps to reduce his own risk for a heart attack by working out, losing weight and eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Much to Gulden's relief, the public accountability offered just the motivational boost he needed.

"It forced me to really take control of my health," said Gulden, "because now that you're out there in the limelight, people see you and wonder, 'Well, what are you doing differently?'"

First step: Physical activity

For Gulden, he's now doing quite a few things differently. One of the first things he did was join the local fitness center, where he tries to work out every day for a half hour to an hour. If he misses a day, he tries to make up for it by working out a little longer the following day if he can.

He admitted, "Most people hate to go work out. But after you're there, it feels pretty good, especially when you get done."

Although his wife Lisa is an avid runner who works out with exercise equipment in their home, she also joined the fitness center to support him. They have both found it's easier to succeed with their fitness goals when they have a partner and Gulden finds the fitness center atmosphere helps motivate him, too.

He laughed, "You look at another guy there and say 'Well, if HE can stay on the treadmill an extra five minutes, then so can I!'"

Little changes; big difference

Along with his new activity routine, Gulden made a variety of changes in his eating habits. As a bar owner, he doesn't drink much alcohol, but the friendly town bar atmosphere and his varying work schedule offer challenges to managing the waistline in other ways. Customers often bring in different snacks and sweets to try, so he's pleased that he's been able to succeed in cutting back on what he eats, as well as *when* and *how much*.

Gulden has been especially diligent in his efforts to eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. He tries to add "color to his plate" by adding a wide variety of vegetables and fruits, often grabs a banana or granola bar as a snack and now chooses wheat bread over white. Lisa prepares a lot of vegetables with olive oil at home and keeps them handy for healthy snacking.

"I know it's the little things that are going to make a big difference," said Gulden. "With my lifestyle, I still like to eat – there's no doubt about it. But by taking the little steps, I figure you still can eat. You just have to be careful and cut back on the portions and make some wiser decisions."

Well on the way to his goal

As a result of his lifestyle changes, Gulden dropped 12 pounds — from 260 to 248 — in three months. His short-term goal was to have lost a total of 15 to 20 pounds by the time of an upcoming doctor's appointment, and his long-term goal is to be at 225. He also hopes that by losing weight, he may eventually lower his blood pressure enough to get off his medication.

Gulden said his energy level has come back "immensely" and he is committed to maintaining his lifestyle changes to help prevent problems down the road. With a family history of heart disease on his father's side (two uncles died from it), he said, "It's scary. I don't want to have heart problems at age 52 or 55. Even if I lose 50 pounds, I know I will have to continually work out and keep watching what I eat."

A HONU advocate

In addition to focusing on his own health, Gulden also took on an unofficial volunteer advocacy role for HONU as he regularly talked to his bar patrons to encourage them to get screened. He hopes that the commitment he displayed to taking action after his screening helps spur others to take action, too.

"I think a lot people think the screening itself is going to do something for them; that they will do it and things will just fall into place themselves. Well, that's not going to happen. People have to decide what they are going to do and how they are going to do it."

And of course, as Gulden knows well, finding a way to keep yourself accountable is a critical decision, too. (Volunteers for the next HONU ad campaign welcome!)

Solutions for a Healthier New Ulm: 2010 Initiatives

Based on the results of the 2009 HONU screening efforts, it's clear what steps we need to take to succeed in improving the health of the community:

- We need to heavily focus on improving food service environments (e.g., restaurants and cafeterias), to help people make healthier food choices that help them manage their weight.
- We need to provide more intense medical management for people who are at the highest risk for a heart attack. We plan to implement a program that will reach people at a variety of places in the community, in order to make it easy for them to participate.

Our 2010 efforts are focused on programs that we will conduct across the community, in worksites, and in the health care system.

Community efforts

Community programs are essentially open to everyone and occur at the broadest level. For 2010, these include:

- **Community lifestyle challenge program**— Launching in June 2010, this program will segment the 56073 zip code into 25 districts and recruit volunteer neighborhood health leaders in each district. These health leaders will promote HONU programs and organize neighborhood lifestyle challenges each quarter, such as walking clubs, weight loss programs or stress management workshops.

- **FoodWorks program** – Through this program, we are working closely with New Ulm area restaurants and grocery stores to help them develop more healthy, affordably priced food options. Specifically, we help each organization assess their nutrition environment and provide follow-up consulting on menu and food shelf-reengineering practices.
- **Educational cooking programs** – We are offering a series of cooking classes at various sites around the community. In addition, a locally produced television show titled “What’s Cooking New Ulm?” airs each week on the New Ulm Community Access channel.

Worksite efforts

Through the HONU project, we offer a variety of worksite programs in close partnership with area employers. Our primary goal is to help empower employers to develop customized wellness programs for their employees. This involves specialized assessments of the working environment/culture, consulting on benefits design and worksite food offerings, and quarterly training seminars on how worksites in New Ulm are improving their health.

Each quarter, we offer all New Ulm employers the opportunity to conduct a worksite health challenge program focused on a specific health topic, such as weight maintenance, physical activity, or incorporating more fruits and vegetables into the diet.

“I only hope that other places in America will be able to follow suit and do what they can do to pull together like the people of New Ulm and make a difference in their health and welfare.”

- Bob Harper, health and motivational expert from “The Biggest Loser” TV show and keynote speaker at the Heart of New Ulm Community Summit, as quoted in the *New Ulm Journal*

Health care efforts

HONU's health care programs are primarily designed to target patients who are at the highest risk for having a heart attack. Some of these interventions involve tools for doctors; others are delivered directly to patients. Our 2010 health care programs include:

- **Electronic health record enhancements** – Through this effort, we plan to change the way that the electronic health record displays information during an office visit. The goal is to make it easier for doctors to identify patients who are at high risk for having a heart attack and suggest optimal medical therapies based on that risk.
- **Provider seminars** – Each quarter, we offer training programs for area doctors to help them learn more about state-of-the-art preventive medical therapies. The seminars also serve as a platform to update medical providers on the collective progress they are making in terms of managing their patients' heart attack risk factors.

- **HeartConnections high-risk follow-up program** – Launching in July 2010, this program will invite patients who are at the highest risk for having a heart attack to participate in a telephone coaching program. A HONU health coach will consult regularly with patients over the phone to discuss their risk factors for heart attack, recommend appropriate medical and lifestyle therapies, and connect them with area resources and educational materials that can help them improve their health.

This program is essentially a way to “fill the gap” between regular office visits and help provide patients with more frequent support when they are trying to improve their heart health.



Health and motivational expert Bob Harper (kneeling) led 100 New Ulm community leaders in a fitness activity prior to the Second Annual Community Summit held Nov. 7, 2009.

J&R Schugel Trucking:

“Driven” and On the Road to Better Health

As a 35-year-old family-owned company, New Ulm-based J&R Schugel Trucking, Inc. prides itself on its commitment and connection to its drivers and their families. The company is known throughout the industry for focusing on what’s important to both drivers and their families as far as their careers and goals.

In 2009, with the help of the HONU project, the company expanded that connection to include efforts to improve employees’ heart health and overall health as well.

Leah Peck, J&R Schugel’s director of human resources, manages the company’s health plan. She explained, “On a daily basis, I am working to either educate, or I call it ‘fight fires,’ with someone who is in crisis or near crisis with a medical issue such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, high cholesterol, heart disease or lung disease. In our industry, these health concerns are common. Our drivers have a largely sedentary lifestyle and our office workers sit at a desk all day.”

When the opportunity arose to become involved in the HONU project, Peck jumped at the chance.

“For me, this is the most exciting project that has been launched in New Ulm in the seven years I’ve lived here,” explained Peck. “We are looking to inspire and motivate change in our community. And our workplace is a great place to start. I really want our employees to have the opportunity to not only make healthy decisions, but to also understand how those decisions, whether healthy or not, affect them in their day-to-day lives.”

Screening was the first step

J&R Schugel has about 100 employees (86 full-time) at its New Ulm headquarters, with another

500 in three states and numerous drivers traversing the country. Prior to getting on board with the Heart of New Ulm project, the company did not have a formal wellness program in place. In partnership with their health insurer, Blue Cross, they sent regular mailings on various health education topics to employees’ homes, but that was pretty much the extent of it.

The company took the first step toward launching their wellness program in early May 2009 when they signed on to be one of the first local employers to offer a free onsite HONU heart health screening. The screening results from 84 participants (employees along with some spouses) highlighted three major risk areas: metabolic syndrome (a clustering of risk factors for heart disease), obesity and smoking.

Formalizing a wellness program

After reviewing the screening results, Peck said the company’s executive management committee and the company’s owner all agreed they needed to do something. More importantly, Peck said she felt a large number of employees were definitely motivated to try and look for ways to make lifestyle changes.

They established a wellness committee and publicized a contest for employees to name the program. Holly Glaubitz, a HONU health educator and wellness coordinator, helped the committee set goals, coordinate lunch-and-learn seminars, and set their plans in motion.

“Although we’re a large company in the community, we do not have a full-time wellness person — I do three jobs,” said Peck. “So all of the aid and organization that HONU gave us was great. The official launch of our wellness

program and developing corporate goals and regular programming didn't begin until they helped us kick that off. The HONU staff really helped us put everything together and formalize our program."

The company's wellness programming began with a variety of lunch-and-learn seminars. The committee then spent three months planning for a company-sponsored 5K run to be held on National Run at Work Day, which would officially launch the corporate-wide wellness program. To help employees prepare, they coordinated practice walks/runs on Saturdays and offered progressive running calendars, exercise calendars, tips on healthy eating and more.

"Driven" toward wellness

On Sept. 18, 2009, the company officially launched the "Driven" wellness program, with its slogan of "On the Road to Better Health." About 60 people participated in the 5K run on the community trail outside J&R Schugel's terminals in New Ulm, while about 30 employees joined in at the company's other three facilities.

"Afterward, the pride that all of our employees showed in having finished that event was just really huge," said Peck. "Many of our employees were very inspired."

A healthy cooking contest held after the race was equally inspiring and Peck said they were encouraged by the enthusiastic participation of employees at all levels — from the mechanics and the maintenance director to management.

Next steps

Since the kickoff event, Peck said many employees have joined different exercise facilities in the community. The wellness committee made some policy changes to make smoking less convenient at work. They also added a smoking cessation program in the fall of 2009. For employees who participate in Blue Cross' Quit Smoking program, J&R Schugel pays for their nicotine patches, gum and any program fees.

In other initiatives, the committee is working to provide screenings to employees in their other locations, continue programming on a variety of health topics, and encourage wellness innovation at all levels of the organization.

"With this project, the more that people can involve themselves in the community ... the more we can teach them to make and create and give these healthy things to their families ... that will help us," explained Peck. "People want to learn these things. They want to know how they can inspire their family and their future."



J&R Schugel Trucking held a 5K run event for the kickoff of their "Driven" wellness program. Planners made an extra effort to ensure that every detail of the event would promote a truly heart-healthy experience. Along with side dishes from a healthy cooking contest, the lunch buffet featured fresh fruit and healthy grilled chicken served in the appropriate 3 to 4-ounce portions that HONU staff had educated them about, giving employees first-hand experience in seeing and eating a proper portion size.

Photo courtesy of J&R Schugel Trucking

New Ulm Can Do It

As project planners reflecting on the 2009 Heart of New Ulm project experience, we are filled with great optimism. At the start of the year, no one could be certain how many citizens would show up to get screened, who might attend a heart health education class, whether or not community leaders would stay engaged in the project after the novelty wore off, or how much support could realistically be provided by other technical teams within the already busy health care system. What quickly became clear was how exceptionally dedicated, hard-working and enthusiastic the various project stakeholders are.

The willingness of the community to act will ultimately determine the success of the Heart of New Ulm project. And throughout the New Ulm community in the project's first year, we have witnessed a real sense of ownership arise. **Because of this, we are convinced that if any community in the country can reduce, and eventually eliminate, heart attacks, it is New Ulm.** So, to the residents of New Ulm, thank you for making the 2009 HONU project efforts such a success!



Charles Stephens, MD



Jeff VanWormer, MS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Stephens".

Charles Stephens, MD
Family physician, New Ulm Medical Center
Heart of New Ulm local medical director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey VanWormer".

Jeff VanWormer, MS
Epidemiologist, Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation
Heart of New Ulm project director

Take Action!

If you have not done so already, please consider the following action steps to continue our progress toward making New Ulm the healthiest city in the country:

- **Model healthy lifestyle changes** – Almost all of us can get a little healthier today by eating more fruits and vegetables, getting more physical activity or quitting smoking. But help others around you, too! Talk about health values with your friends, family and coworkers.
- **See your medical provider regularly** – Remember that the New Ulm Medical Center physicians and staff are here to help. Bring up the topic of heart attack prevention during your next office visit.
- **Participate in our HONU programs** – Look for information about upcoming activities in the *New Ulm Journal* or visit our Web site at www.heartofnewulm.org, where you can get up-to-date information on HONU programs and sign up for email updates. Be sure to join the Heart of New Ulm Facebook group, too. You can also call us at 507.233.1945.
- **Volunteer your time or talent** – Consider volunteering for various HONU activities. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, contact Shawn Hildebrandt at 507.233.1945.



After their screening, New Ulm residents Bob and Jacque Fuller worked as a team to successfully lose weight and improve their blood pressure. After eight months, Bob had lost 50 pounds and Jackie had lost 39 pounds — just a few pounds shy of their goals. Both of their blood pressures had improved, and Bob's improved enough that his doctor was able to cut back on one of his blood pressure medications.

Become Our Partner

The Heart of New Ulm project is a true partnership model that cuts across broad segments of the New Ulm community, the state and even the nation. In addition to state and federal government grants, we are extremely pleased with the generous financial support that many local businesses, organizations and individuals have provided.

Local efforts have raised nearly \$360,000 and individuals and organizations have volunteered hundreds of hours to help successfully lead and implement the project. Our thanks go out to all who have contributed in making the Heart of New Ulm's first year a success.

As the Heart of New Ulm project expands, our need for philanthropy continues to grow. Allina Hospitals and Clinics, through its Center for Healthcare Innovation, has provided a portion of base funding for the Heart of New Ulm project; however, additional funding is still desperately needed to provide the resources that our community needs to make sustainable change.

To successfully achieve our ambitious goal of reducing heart attacks, we need many collaborative partners — from volunteers to donors to participants. We invite you to join us and become our partner in making New Ulm the healthiest city in the country.

To learn more about how you can make an impact on the Heart of New Ulm project, please contact Carisa Buegler, executive director of the New Ulm Medical Center Foundation, at 507.233.1188.



“Improving the health of our community is a common goal we all share.”
— Lori Wightman, New Ulm Medical Center president

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of Commerce
Lori Wightman, New Ulm Medical Center

Staff:

Gretchen Benson, RD, CDE, Minneapolis
Heart Institute Foundation
Jackie Boucher, MS, RD, CDE, Minneapolis
Heart Institute Foundation
Rebecca Fliszar, RD, New Ulm Medical Center
Holly Glaubitz, New Ulm Medical Center
Kitty Hietala, New Ulm Medical Center
Shawn Hildebrandt, New Ulm Medical Center
Julie Long, NP, New Ulm Medical Center
Raquel Pereira, MS, RD, LD, Minneapolis Heart
Institute Foundation
Betsy Pieser, New Ulm Medical Center
Charles Stephens, MD, New Ulm Medical Center
Jeff VanWormer, MS, Minneapolis Heart
Institute Foundation

Scientific Committee:

Jackie Boucher, MS, RD, CDE
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The Heart of New Ulm project is a collaborative partnership of Allina Hospitals & Clinics, the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation, the New Ulm Medical Center and the community of New Ulm.

