



# Year Three Report to the Community



  
**heartsbeatback**  
THE HEART OF NEW ULM PROJECT

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**“It is amazing to think of the amount of work that has been done in three years in collecting data, in organizing worksite wellness groups and neighborhood exercise teams, in working with restaurants and stores to offer healthier choices, and in the New Ulm Medical Center itself and its staff’s approach to health care ...**

**... it may take a couple of decades or more to really see the benefits of these efforts, but when those benefits start to roll in, it will be the work done up front that will have started it.”**

***“Thumbs Up,” New Ulm Journal, Feb. 4, 2012***

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*Cover photos:*

*Top left: One-on-one coaching session at a heart health screening*

*Top right: Jingle Bell Jam 4-mile walk/run event; photo courtesy of the New Ulm Journal*

*Bottom left: Learning about Hi-maize natural resistant starch at the Fourth Annual Community Summit and Food Expo*

*Bottom right: George Cottom of George’s Steaks & Spirits, participant in the FoodWorks Restaurant Program*

# Taking advantage of a tremendous gift

My grandfather, Joseph Beranek, Sr., died in 1970 at the age of 96. I remember when people asked about his passing, it was simply said, “He died of old age.”

In 1892 Joseph immigrated to the United States from German Bohemia, all by himself at the age of 17. He arrived in the New Ulm area and worked as a farmhand until his marriage to Katherine Wendinger in 1904. They bought their own farm, raised nine children, and in 1936 retired and moved to a small house in the village of St. George, close to the farms of their eight surviving children.

Joseph’s wife died in 1955, and he lived alone for the next 10 years. He never had a driver’s license and would often walk a half-mile or two to visit his children on their nearby farms. When he was 92 years old, his children decided that he shouldn’t live by himself anymore, so he began traveling the “family circuit” — spending a week at each son or daughter’s home.

It would be interesting to know what the actuarial statistics were for a male born in modern-day Slovakia, in contrast to when my grandfather was born there in 1874. I have often wondered how my grandfather lived to be 96 years old. Certainly, he had a very rich diet of liver and blood sausage, pork, beef, lard, butter, bacon, cheese, eggs and beer, but he also ate a lot of produce from his family’s plentiful vegetable garden. Good genes were undoubtedly a factor, but so were walking, a labor-intensive vocation, and a very close family and social network. We’re certainly living longer than people did in 1874, but due to the lack of exercise, walking and physical labor, along with a poor diet, many of us have health issues to go along with our longer life expectancy.

Out of necessity, we need to wake up and realize that the quality of life that comes with a longer life expectancy may not be as we imagined, and certainly not guaranteed. Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is a tremendous gift that has landed in our laps, and the citizens of our area need to take advantage of its potential. The ideas, hints, knowledge and encouragement from the staff made available to us are fantastic.

Nonetheless, the community has to become involved in the project to reap the benefits; I believe this is happening. Watercooler conversations at my workplace often reveal people making a point of taking extra walks during the day, eating more fruits and vegetables, and reading the labels on food packaging. I don’t know if everyone in our area will acknowledge this wake-up call, but I am definitely seeing changes in the habits of friends, neighbors, colleagues and family members, which hopefully will lead to a ripple effect in the entire community.

I sincerely thank all those involved in the Heart of New Ulm effort. I have enjoyed and appreciated being a part of the project, and I encourage more people to participate. Again, I simply cannot stress enough what a tremendous gift this has been for our area. Ideally, many years from now at our own deaths (and I hope it is far, far in the future), people will not say that someone died of heart disease, but simply that “he or she died of old age.”



Dan Beranek

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**Ideally, many years from now, people will not say that someone died of heart disease, but simply that “he or she died of old age.”**

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Beranek". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Beranek, Alliance Bank  
Heart of New Ulm Project Steering Committee member

# Creating not just change, but *lasting* change



Thomas Knickelbine, MD

Looking back on 2011, the third year for Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project (HONU) was full of many successes.

More than 3,200 adults participated in our free heart health screenings. Nearly seven out of every 10 people who showed up for screenings had been screened in 2009, while about three out of 10 people who showed up underwent a screening for the first time. For those new to the screening process, it was a great step toward understanding their risk for a heart attack and steps they can take to live a healthier lifestyle.

For those who returned for their second screening, it was a great opportunity to measure their personal heart health progress over the last two years. Their participation also provided the project with data that is critical to helping us demonstrate how New Ulm residents are succeeding in making positive, heart-healthy changes over our 10-year project period.

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**Our strong base of  
community support is  
essential to ensuring the  
project is sustainable in  
the future.**

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This report includes a brief look at the screening results, which show that New Ulm is indeed making real progress in taking steps to prevent heart attacks. The following pages also share highlights of the many initiatives we undertook in 2011 in health care, the community and local worksites.

Throughout all of the project's activities, it is truly the commitment and involvement of the entire community that continues to drive our success: Physicians, nurses and health educators at New Ulm Medical Center are providing excellent care and educational counseling, while restaurants are offering healthier menus. Many volunteers are enthusiastically coordinating events and employers are embracing worksite wellness. Community leaders are helping us plan programming and local organizations are helping us promote heart-healthy education and lifestyles. In short, the support of the community continues to be nothing short of phenomenal.

As we look to the future, our strong base of community support is essential to ensuring the project is sustainable. Numerous articles and studies indicate that the real benefit of a program like the Heart of New Ulm Project will come in 20 or 25 years, well after the project officially ends in 2018. That's why our goal with all of our programs and initiatives is to ensure they will be sustainable in New Ulm once we're gone, as well as replicable in other communities across the country. With your help, New Ulm will not only be known as the healthiest city in America, but the city that shows everyone else how it's done!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Knickelbine MD".

Thomas Knickelbine, MD, FACC, FSCAI  
Minneapolis Heart Institute  
Heart of New Ulm Project medical director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Stephens MD".

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

# CREATING CHANGE IN Health care

■ In late 2011, New Ulm Medical Center launched the **Heart & Vascular Prevention Clinic**. The clinic provides more intensive clinical care for patients who have multiple risk factors for heart disease, as well as for those who may already have heart disease, diabetes or other vascular disease.

■ Our **HeartBeat Connections program** continues to provide phone-based coaching to individuals at high risk for a heart attack. More than 350 patients have participated, and preliminary data show they have made meaningful improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol and lifestyle. Some key successes:

- Seven in 10 participants are taking daily aspirin.
- Nearly six in 10 participants are getting at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day (up from less than three in 10).
- More than three in 10 participants are getting 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week.

In addition to these healthy behavior changes, participants have experienced positive changes in their risk factors after the first nine months of the program, including:

- Six in 10 participants have cholesterol levels “at goal.”

- Six in 10 participants have normal levels of blood glucose (up from just four in 10).
- More people who needed medications for blood cholesterol and blood pressure were prescribed medications and were taking them.

In 2012, the coaching program is being expanded to include patients with diabetes and heart disease who are referred by their health care provider.

- In 2011, we formed a **Clinical Leadership Team** to increase involvement of the health care community within the project in order to expand clinical interventions. The team meets monthly and includes key leaders from New Ulm Medical Center, the Minneapolis Heart Institute and the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation.
- **Grand Rounds educational events** continued to bring nationally known speakers to audiences of New Ulm health care providers in 2011. Topics included *Preventive and Secondary Cardiology Strategies*, *Practical Application of the Mediterranean Diet in Cardiovascular Disease* and *Health Care Disparities/Access: Crying for Local Solutions*.



Colleen Zenk from the Minnesota Beef Council does a healthy cooking demonstration at German Park Pavilion, which also featured free recipes, tips and samples. Several demonstrations were held throughout 2011 in partnership with the Minnesota Beef Council and Minnesota Pork Board, among other organizations, to help people learn practical strategies for healthy eating.

# 2011 RESULTS: Heart health screenings

From May through December 2011, HONU conducted 66 screening events at more than 24 worksites, several community sites and New Ulm Medical Center. 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, number of daily fruit and vegetable servings, stress level, taking heart disease medications as prescribed

At the completion of the screening, each participant received a Heart of New Ulm Lifestyle Score from 0-10 based on five lifestyle factors that have a big influence on overall health:

1. How much tobacco a person uses
2. BMI (Body Mass Index)
3. How many fruits and vegetables a person eats
4. How much alcohol the person drinks
5. How physically active the person is

The higher a person's Lifestyle Score, the more optimal their lifestyle choices and the healthier they are likely to be. Participants who were also screened in 2009 received information showing how their scores from the two years compared. Those with a score less than 10 were encouraged to make a goal to increase it by at least two points each year, and those already at a 10 encouraged to maintain it.

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**A lot of people making small changes can have a greater impact on the rate of heart attacks than a few people making great changes.**

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## What are people in New Ulm doing great at when it comes to helping prevent heart attacks?

- More than five in 10 people scored high (an eight or 10) for their Heart of New Ulm Lifestyle Score in 2011.
- People are eating more fruits and vegetables.
- People are exercising more.
- People are more effectively taking medications to address high blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Stress levels are down.
- Peoples' behavioral and health care changes have led to reductions in their biomedical risks, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood glucose.

Heart health screenings were open to all adults in the community. In 2009, 58 percent of screening participants were female and 42 percent were male. In 2011, 63 percent of screening participants were female and 37 percent were male.

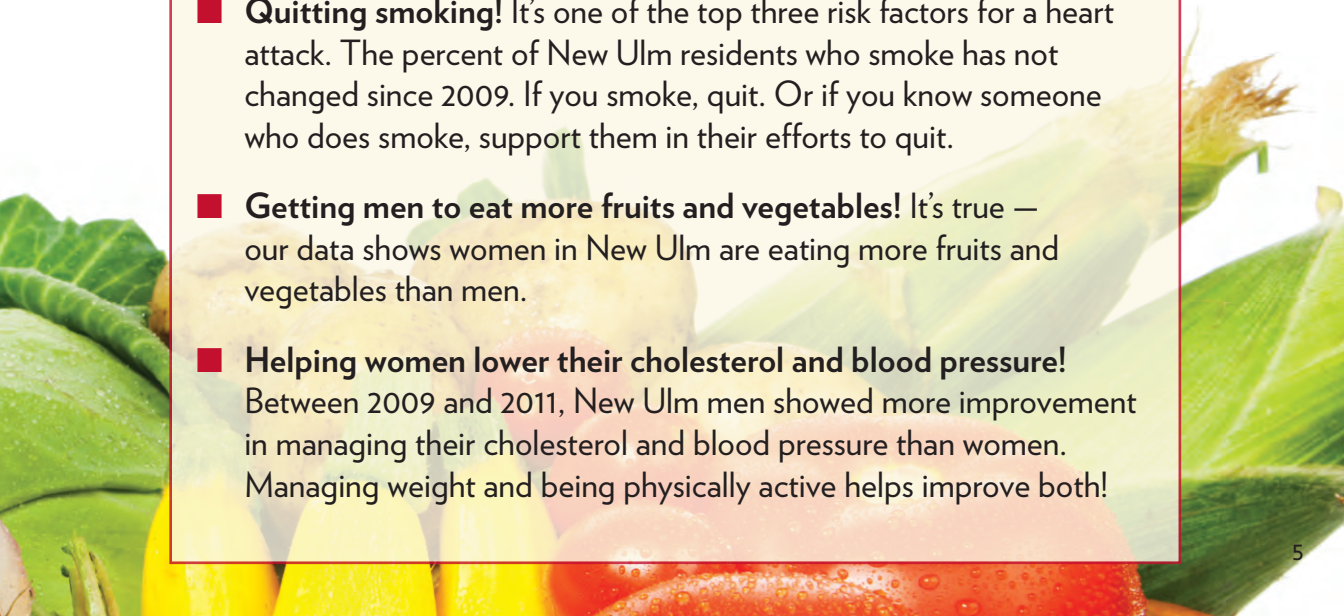
## Comparison of selected 2009 and 2011 screening results for all adult screening participants

	2009 n = 5097	2011 n = 3150	
<b>Risk Behaviors</b>			
Current smoker	9%	9%	☹️
High stress level	12%	10%	😊
<b>Protective Behaviors</b>			
5+ fruit and vegetable servings a day	16%	25%	😊
150+ minutes of moderate-level physical activity a week	66%	74%	😊
<b>Biomedical Risk Factors</b>			
High blood pressure (≥140/90 mmHG)	24%	20%	😊
High total cholesterol (≥200 mg/dL)	44%	41%	😊
High LDL cholesterol (≥130 mg/dL)	34%	33%	😊
High triglycerides (≥150 mg/dL)	29%	27%	😊
High glucose (≥100 mg/dL)	28%	23%	😊
Weight (average in pounds)	184	181	😊

Percentages are rounded.

## What do people in New Ulm still need to work on to help prevent heart attacks?

- **Quitting smoking!** It's one of the top three risk factors for a heart attack. The percent of New Ulm residents who smoke has not changed since 2009. If you smoke, quit. Or if you know someone who does smoke, support them in their efforts to quit.
  
- **Getting men to eat more fruits and vegetables!** It's true — our data shows women in New Ulm are eating more fruits and vegetables than men.
  
- **Helping women lower their cholesterol and blood pressure!** Between 2009 and 2011, New Ulm men showed more improvement in managing their cholesterol and blood pressure than women. Managing weight and being physically active helps improve both!



# Eric Gramentz:

## The message, “You’ve got to start today” hits home

When Eric Gramentz’ daughter brought home a picture she had drawn in kindergarten one day, something seemed amiss to him. His wife and two daughters were clearly recognizable in the picture — represented as stick people. Eric himself was a little larger, which did not surprise him. What he couldn’t figure out was why he had two smiles in the picture. When he asked his daughter she explained in the innocent and honest way that five-year-olds are known for that one was his smile and one was his chin.

“That’s when I decided something had to be done,” said the eight-year New Ulm Police Department officer. On Oct. 1, 2011, Eric decided it was time to put serious effort into portion control, monitoring calories and physical activity. His starting weight then was 290 pounds. Today he weighs in at about 260 with a goal weight of 240.

“I had gone to see Danny Cahill (at The Heart of New Ulm Project’s Annual Community Summit in October 2010) and the one thing I took away from that is that tomorrow never comes,” he said. “You have to start today.”

It was a year (and that illustrative wake-up call from his daughter) before taking those words to heart. But Eric credits his wife as being his biggest supporter and motivator.

Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project (HONU) has also helped him keep on task with materials and recipes.

“Getting the information from Heart of New Ulm helps as a reminder and we will take some of the recipes to see how we can use them,” Eric said.

### A new daily routine

Eric’s daily routine starts out with the treadmill at 5 a.m. — or whenever he wakes up, depending on which shift he is working that day. “I have to get it out of the way first thing when I wake up.

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**“The first time I ran a quarter mile, I almost died,” Eric laughs. “I progressively added a little more and a little more each time I ran until I was able to run four miles without stopping.”**

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Then I know I’m done with the workout for the day and the focus for the rest of the day is on eating right.”

Eric ran in the HONU Jingle Bell Jam 4-mile fun run last December, which was a proud moment for him.

“The first time I ran a quarter mile back in October 2011 I almost died,” he laughs. “But I progressively built it up and added a little more and a little more each time until I was able to run four miles without stopping.”

During a six or seven-week period, an injury kept him from the treadmill and he was surprised to find that he actually missed it. He is back on the treadmill now after listening to his body, letting the injury heal and not injuring himself any further.

His lunch habits have gone from leaving the drive-thru with four chicken sandwiches to a plain turkey and cheese sandwich (no dressing) with carrots, fruit and trail mix. Fruit is also a daily snack.

“I used to joke that, when we went to a buffet, my goal was to make them lose money on me,” he said. “We still go to buffets but my first plate is always a salad or fruit and I’ll have two plates total. Not four or five like I used to.”

Portion control is important, he said, when temptation comes calling at work. “There’s always food at the police department. People are always bringing in food — trying out a new recipe or treating their co-workers. And it’s great. It’s really nice. But I really have to monitor my portion size or skip the treats altogether.”

Though there’s plenty of temptation at work, Eric stressed that there is also plenty of support.

“My family and co-workers are very supportive,” he said. “I have a co-worker who was kind of a ‘weight-loss buddy’ initially and we would talk about what worked for each of us. A couple of my co-workers have said, ‘If you can do it, I can do it.’”

### **Fitting exercise in his day and budget**

Getting in shape doesn’t have to be expensive or time-consuming, Eric points out.

“Half an hour a day isn’t that hard and you don’t have to own a treadmill. You can throw on your shoes and head outside,” he said.

Eating healthy also doesn’t have to be an expensive proposition. Eric and his wife plan ahead by keeping

cut-up vegetables in the freezer, ready to throw into a hot dish.

Eric hopes to inspire his daughters, ages 5 and 3, to maintain good health, too. “I know what it was like in school being heavy and I would never want that for my daughters. I will do anything to help them be healthier.”

Even though it may seem like a long haul to lose 30 pounds or more, Eric says, once you get started, it doesn’t take that long before the benefits start to become obvious.

“I did the Heart of New Ulm screening in 2009 and when I got my results I almost fell over when I saw how bad they were,” he said. “I went in for a physical last fall or early winter — not that long after I started making changes — and the numbers were already drastically changing.”

His advice to those looking to start down this path toward better health?

“You’ve got to start today even if it’s something small,” he said. “It’s not going to happen overnight. But if you cheat, you’re only cheating yourself.”



**“I have a co-worker who was kind of a ‘weight-loss buddy’ initially and we would talk about what worked for each of us. A couple of my co-workers have said, ‘If you can do it, I can do it.’”**

**— Eric Gramentz**

# CREATING CHANGE IN THE **Community**

## **Nutrition Environment — FoodWorks Program**

■ **Restaurant Program:** Launched in November 2011, we've partnered with local restaurants that are committed to serving the same great-tasting food, while making it easier for people to eat healthier.

Heart of New Ulm staff provided a free consultation to each participating restaurant, analyzed their menu and made suggestions for improvements. We then awarded each restaurant one of three FoodWorks Restaurant Program achievement levels — Gold, Silver or Bronze — based on the number of healthy practices each restaurant agreed to offer.

Participating restaurants have agreed to implement practices such as offering items with more fruits and vegetables and fewer total calories, using healthier fats when cooking, and offering whole grain options (for example, whole-wheat bread).

■ **Convenience Store Program:** The Snack SWAP campaign continued into early 2011 at Kwik Trip and Holiday to make choosing a healthier snack on the go a little easier.

In 2012, a Beverage SWAP campaign at Casey's, Holiday and Kwik Trip convenience stores in New Ulm is helping people make healthier beverage selections for their heart and their weight.

■ **Grocery Store Program:** Staff continued to conduct free grocery store tours in 2011 to help people shop with heart health in mind. In late 2012, we'll be launching a grocery store campaign to help make it easier for people to make healthy choices.

■ **Farmers Market Program:** In late 2011, we received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expand the availability of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables in New Ulm and encourage people to buy and eat more of them. We'll be conducting a marketing campaign for the KNUJ Farmers Market, training farmers to meet increased demand, and expanding the market's operating hours.

Virginia Suker-Moldan, manager at Turner Hall, presents the restaurant's entrées that were approved by the Heart of New Ulm Project as part of achieving their Gold-level designation.

Additional participating Gold-level restaurants as of April 2012 included George's Fine Steaks and Spirits, Otto's Feierhaus & Bierstube, and Subway. Lola's Larkspur Market is a Silver-level participant, while Burger King, DJ's Restaurant, Joni's Restaurant, Lamplighter Family Sports Bar & Grill, McDonald's, Perkins Restaurant & Bakery, Ulmer Cafe and Veigel's Kaiserhoff are all participating at the Bronze level.



## Community Health Challenge and Holiday Trimmings

- In January 2011, we launched the **Take Five Community Health Challenge**, a yearlong challenge focused on five key behaviors that target weight management:
  1. Set a goal to lose five pounds,
  2. Be physically active five days a week,
  3. Eat five times a day,
  4. Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and
  5. Take five minutes for yourself each day.
- In October, we launched the **Six-Week Jump-Start to Losing Weight** as part of the Take Five Challenge, designed to help people re-energize their weight loss efforts and help them make progress toward their goal. People were encouraged to lose five pounds over the six-week challenge period. Danny Cahill, Season 8 winner of the NBC TV show, “The Biggest Loser: Second Chances” and the speaker at the Heart of New Ulm’s Community Summit in 2010, provided motivational messaging for the campaign.
- In November, 540 people participated in the eight-week **Holiday Trimmings** program offered to the entire community. Previously offered exclusively at worksites, the program is designed to help people prevent weight gain during the celebration- and food-filled holiday season.
- Throughout 2011, we continued to offer a multitude of **community health programs**, including cooking classes, tobacco cessation courses, dancing events, neighborhood walking clubs, running/walking family events, group fitness classes and a wide variety of educational seminars, among others.

Hosted by registered dietitian Rebecca Fliszar, our weekly “What’s Cooking New Ulm?” cooking show continues to air on local cable access, featuring heart-healthy dishes and local guests who are passionate about cooking.

## The Six-Week Jump-Start to Losing Weight

### Participation: 992 people in New Ulm

When asked about their goals for the challenge in a pre-program survey:

- Almost nine in 10 people cited losing weight, while six in 10 cited increasing their physical activity and eating healthier.

In the post-program survey:

- Four in 10 said they made some progress toward losing weight, increasing physical activity and/or eating healthier.
- Nearly seven in 10 said the challenge helped them overcome some barriers to improve their heart health.



# Chuck Hanson: The Take Five Community Health Challenge was just the ticket

For New Ulm resident Chuck Hanson, 43, the Take Five Community Health Challenge turned out to be just the ticket he needed to start making some healthy changes.

Back in 2009, Chuck had participated in a free heart health screening offered at his worksite, the New Ulm-based law firm of Gislason and Hunter, but he simply wasn't motivated at that time to do anything about his expanding waistline. However, after talking with his doctor about a year-and-a-half later, he knew it was time to act.

"Just hearing the word 'obese' from my doctor is what pretty much did it," said Chuck. "I'm 6 feet tall, and I was right at 250 pounds. The thought of losing all the weight was just so daunting, but I thought, well, if I'm going to do something, I have to get it done now. The doctor also mentioned that my blood pressure was high and I thought, 'wow.' I'd always been told that I had really good blood pressure. I knew that news was another reason to really look at doing something about my weight."

Using the Take Five Challenge booklet, Chuck started tracking his daily eating in February 2011 and also started going to the New Ulm Recreation Center

(Vogel), with a goal of getting there at least three to four times a week.

After six months, Chuck lost an impressive 83 pounds. Now weighing in at his goal weight of 167, he's striving to maintain it. As a result of his new healthy habits, his blood pressure is back to normal as well.

## Tracking was an eye-opener

An assistant county attorney for Watonwan County, Chuck attributes his success to the combination of several proven weight loss strategies: 1) tracking his progress, 2) adding breakfast, 3) eating more fruits and vegetables, 4) monitoring his calories, 5) exercising regularly, and 6) weighing himself regularly.

"In the past, I definitely tried to find that easy fix," Chuck admitted. "I did the Atkins Diet for awhile and this and that, but it's like they say — it's as simple as tracking what you eat and exercising. I think that's what was really the key for me — realizing that it wasn't going to be that easy road."

When Chuck started tracking, his biggest eye openers were that he wasn't eating anywhere near enough fruits and vegetables, but was getting way too many calories.



**"It's as simple as tracking what you eat and exercising. I think that's what was really the key for me."**

**— Chuck Hanson, posing with his tracking logs from the Take Five Community Health Challenge**

“A typical lunch for me back then would be a couple of frozen burritos,” he explained. “I really wasn’t eating fruits and vegetables at all, other than perhaps a casserole with corn in it or something for supper. I was also amazed at the amount of calories I was eating. When you’re talking 500 calories in one burrito, I would easily be eating 1,000 calories for lunch alone and probably double that for supper.”

Chuck wasn’t eating breakfast at all, but his desk drawer at work was filled with high-calorie snacks like bags of cookies to snack on throughout the day. The calories were adding up quickly — way more than the recommended amount of 2,200 to 2,400 calories for a man of his age with a sedentary lifestyle.

Today, Chuck’s snack drawer is pretty much gone, and he starts his day with a glass of V8 and some toast before he leaves, followed by a banana at the office around 9 or 9:30. His usual bag lunch includes an apple, a turkey sandwich on whole wheat, carrots and another fruit or vegetable, such as pickled beets, pears or blueberries.

## Removing the barriers to exercise

Committing to a regular exercise routine has also been key, and Chuck overcame a variety of barriers to make it work. From both a mental and physical perspective, he was apprehensive about starting to exercise. He’d had knee surgery in 2003, and although his knee was now stronger, it would still “buckle” periodically.

“I was really kind of leery about working out more,” said Chuck. “I think I probably used the fear of doing something to my knee as an excuse not to work out or get exercise.”

Once he started working out on the elliptical at Vogel, however, he was pleasantly surprised at how it didn’t bother his knee — and how exercise and weight loss actually improved it. He even ran a Hermann 5K race with his wife, Kim, and said he now has “absolutely no issues whatsoever” with the knee. His usual routine is to go six miles on the elliptical, which takes about a half hour, and then head into the weight room for some upper-body strengthening exercise.

Time is often one of the biggest barriers for people looking to be more active, and Chuck and Kim were no exception. With an 11-year-old son, Jake, and a 7-year-old daughter Brooke, busy work schedules, volunteer basketball coaching duties and more, they initially found working out to be a bit of a juggling act.

When Chuck first started working out, he would head to Vogel after his half-hour drive from work in St. James, but that meant he didn’t get home until about 6:30 p.m. — even later in the winter when driving can take longer. Meanwhile, Kim was working out in the mornings. She soon suggested using a tag-team approach where they would both work out in the morning.

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**“Don’t be daunted by it. Just get started — that’s the hardest thing.”**

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Now, five days a week, Kim heads to Vogel first at about 5 a.m.; when she gets home at about 5:45, Chuck heads out. They also occasionally go on weekends and take the kids swimming.

“I really like this schedule” said Chuck. “I now have my whole evening with the family and we can go out and do whatever we want to do. And we both have so much more energy throughout the day.”

## The “old Chuck” is back

With his weight under control, Chuck has found his stress level also seems to be in better control, too.

“Now that I’m with the county attorney’s office, I do a lot of prosecution ... that’s all I do. So it seems like it would be more intense (than his former law firm job), and it is in a way, but for some reason it’s just more relaxing for me. I’m in court every day, but now that I’ve lost the weight, work does not stress me out at all.”

He added, “Even around the house, Kim has said it’s nice to have the ‘old Chuck’ back. “When I was that heavy, I obviously wasn’t too happy with myself.”

Chuck’s advice to others: “Don’t be daunted by it. Just get started — that’s the hardest thing. That’s where the Take Five booklet really helped me. It had the weekly goals, and I followed through and wrote everything down. I had a huge amount of weight to lose facing me, but the tracking helped me get it done.”

He added, “I promised myself and Kim and the family that I would never go back to that weight again. It *can* be done. Six months seems like a long time, but when the weight starts dropping off, it’s just amazing to watch it drop off. You feel so good about yourself.”

# A community taking ownership

Over the last several years, the New Ulm community has taken ownership of several events and activities formerly coordinated by The Heart of New Ulm Project — and thus taken steps to sustain their commitment to health:

- **Dance Your Heart Out:** Started two years ago by one of the project's 23 volunteer-led districts, this event is now offered through the school district's Community Education program and normally has about 40 participants.
- **Organized walk/run events:** Prior to HONU, only one annual walk/run event was held in New Ulm. With the support of the project, there are now eight races each year, with HONU staff having direct involvement in only one.
- **Cooking classes:** Local residents with a gift for cooking have stepped forward to offer many different classes through the Community Education program.

## The new norm: Being physically active

While organized community events are taking off, individual participation rates are, too. In fact, in the last three years, memberships at the city-owned New Ulm Recreation Center have increased 81 percent!

In October 2008, when HONU's First Annual Community Summit was held, the center had 917 annual members and 1,349 punch-card members; by October 2011, those numbers had increased to 1,339 annual members, 2,631 punch-card members and 150 Silver Sneakers

members. In addition, the center welcomes people without memberships to free Heart of New Ulm-sponsored walking clubs held three times a week.

Private fitness centers in the community have also reported increased memberships, helping to create a culture where being physically active is the new norm!

"It's really amazing to see people so in tune to their health ... becoming more educated and aware of how to make good choices, as well as staying committed to exercising regularly. It's great to see the whole family getting involved, too."

— Cheryl Kormann  
Assistant Director, New Ulm  
Park & Recreation Department



A Zumba fitness class in a neighborhood park

# CREATING CHANGE IN **Worksites**

In working with New Ulm-area employers, our goal is to empower them to engage their workforce in practicing a culture of wellbeing while at work. In 2011, we continued to make great strides in this area:

■ **Wellness programming:** Prior to HONU's initiatives, only five of the largest 100 employers in the area had active wellness programming. As of 2011, there were 38 employers offering some form of programming, ranging from a formal wellness committee to participation in a lifestyle challenge program.

In addition, HONU can provide employers with employee health and wellness presentations, organizational environmental/policy/culture assessments, tools to implement policies such as healthy vending and tobacco-free worksites, employer leadership education events and an employer wellness newsletter subscription.

■ **Screenings:** During our heart health screening season, 24 worksites hosted a free onsite screening for their employees. Employers

received comprehensive, aggregate screening data pinpointing the top areas for health improvement among employees. This data can be used to help guide health promotion efforts, enabling employers to focus on the specific lifestyle behaviors that will result in the biggest benefits for employees as well as the overall organization.

■ **Employer education:** Throughout the year, we continued our partnership with the New Ulm Chamber of Commerce by offering a "Hot Topics" breakfast series on how to impact the worksite culture.

At our Annual Worksite Summit held in November 2011, representatives from 36 employers enjoyed a presentation on "Creating a Culture of Wellbeing" by Dr. Rosie Ward, a consultant, professional coach and author.

■ **Employer resources:** In July 2011, we launched a new Employer Resources section on our website, providing employers with easy access to information and materials that can help them with their health promotion efforts.

## Sharing what we're learning in journals and at conferences



Since the Heart of New Ulm Project started, we've published several articles in professional journals and presented at many national conferences. Check out all of our scientific research publications, conference presentations and poster sessions on our website.

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.

# Windings Inc.:

## Putting a culture of wellbeing into motion

It's 2 p.m. and the music just came on over the intercom at Windings, Inc., courtesy of the wellness committee. It's the familiar, rhythmic beat from the TV commercial for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota's "do." campaign, and it's reminding employees throughout the entire facility that it's time to take a break to stretch and move their bodies.

The playful stretching reminder is just one of the many ways that Windings, a 100 percent employee-owned company, is following its corporate slogan of "We put ideas in motion." The company's not just putting mechanical ideas in motion, but an entire culture of health and wellbeing for its 90 employees in New Ulm.

For more than 45 years, Windings has built components for electromagnetic/motion conversion applications. They specialize in the production of stators, rotors, insulated lamination stacks, precision wound coils, other custom wound products and higher-level assemblies, including full motors and generators.

Lori Weinberg, Windings' human resources manager, explained, "We're trying to spread the message that wellbeing is more than just working safely and not having any accidents. Just because we are physically fit or injury-free ... if we're not happy in our career or community, our overall wellness is going to struggle. We want to keep all five elements of wellbeing in balance and in sync."

The five elements that Weinberg references include career, social, financial, physical and community wellbeing, as outlined in the best-selling book, "Wellbeing: The 5 Essential Elements." Employees with low wellbeing can increase health care costs and result in lost revenue, while employees with high wellbeing engage their colleagues and customers, and help their organization realize significant health care savings.

"Where the Heart of New Ulm can really can help us with physical wellbeing, we're working on the other wellbeing elements, too," said Weinberg.

Accordingly, Windings' wellness efforts run the gamut. A physical therapist comes in once a month to do ergonomic analyses. They've offered lunch-and-learns not only on a wide variety of heart health topics, but ergonomics, resiliency training and work-life balance,

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**Employees have made positive improvements in getting at least 150 minutes a week of physical activity, eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and controlling their blood pressure.**

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too. There are even balance balls in conference rooms for employees wanting to engage some muscles other than just those in their brain during meetings.

### **Making progress in several areas**

The company's wellness initiatives started in 2008, just prior to the official launch of the Heart of New Ulm Project (HONU). New Ulm Medical Center started the Wellness at Work initiative that year, and Windings was the first company to sign on.

When HONU arrived, Windings enthusiastically supported the effort and hosted an onsite heart health screening for employees and spouses in which more than 72 percent of eligible adults participated. They hosted another screening in 2011. Throughout both years, the three priority risk factors that emerged among employees were overweight/obesity, high LDL cholesterol, and metabolic syndrome, defined as having at least three of the following risk factors: abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, low HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides or high blood glucose.

While the data show the prevalence of these three priority risk factors is relatively unchanged for Windings when comparing the two screenings, employees have indeed made positive improvements in getting at least 150 minutes a week of physical activity, eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and controlling their blood pressure.

**Windings Inc. employees embraced the physical and community elements of wellbeing at the Stompin' Out Hunger 5k walk/run.**



“It’s amazing how many fruits and vegetables that you see people here eating and sharing,” said Weinberg.

The Employee Stock Ownership Program Committee recently compiled a cookbook of employee recipes, and the company contracted one year with Growing Green Farm in New Ulm to deliver a supply of fruits and vegetables directly to the workplace. Windings offered the fresh produce to employees at a steep discount to encourage people to try different items, along with recipes. The company is considering creating a community garden area for employees to use as well as potentially the broader community.

### **Linking the wellbeing elements**

Windings now ties every company event into one or more of the five wellbeing elements, along with an explanation of why it fits for each element.

The interconnectedness of the five elements is evident in events such as the *Stompin' Out Hunger* 5K run/walk that Windings promoted to employees in September 2011. They gave running shirts not to just the employees who participated, but also to those who came out to cheer on their fellow employees.

“We presented this event as something that we were doing for both the community wellbeing and physical wellbeing elements,” explained Weinberg. “For some people, it was the first walk they’d ever done. Those who came and cheered on the others were really reaching out to help thrive in that community wellbeing element,” said Weinberg.

Windings was one of the first three companies to get involved with the *Go for the Gold Challenge*, an annual Heart of New Ulm-supported challenge now in its third year. Windings employees compete against employees from Minnesota Valley Testing Laboratories and SouthPoint Federal Credit Union in a healthy lifestyle

challenge, such as weight loss, to earn medals and other incentives. They’re now actively trying to recruit more New Ulm companies to participate.

As a company with many long-time, older workers, Weinberg stressed that culture change takes time — and small steps. Part of her challenge has been helping employees understand that the workplace culture today is much different than what it was in the 1980s.

“Back then, you didn’t step away from your computer or your workstation if it wasn’t break time,” she explained.

So now, when the music break comes on, or all the computers in the production area display their twice-a-day stretching reminders, “it’s about giving people permission to do it and empowering them to have fun.”

### **Creating a sustainable effort**

In 2009 and 2010, the company relied on HONU’s resources for many programs, including monthly lunch-and-learn sessions with health educator Holly Glaubitz. The company has regularly offered all five of HONU’s easy-to-implement lifestyle challenge programs.

For 2012, Windings is working to provide additional wellbeing training for the wellness committee, and focusing on helping employees learn how to better handle stress. With their expanded wellbeing focus, Windings now does much of its own programming.

“I love the fact that Heart of New Ulm is still there for ideas, but we can’t just expect the hospitals and the Heart of New Ulm to keep going and take us through it,” Weinberg explained.

This is exactly what HONU wants to see — helping to ensure the community is poised to sustain heart-healthy efforts on its own in the future.

# Project milestones

Former Allina CEO Dick Pettingill and former Minneapolis Heart Institute president Dr. Kevin Graham create the Heart of New Ulm Project, meet with key leaders in New Ulm, Minn., and assign the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation (MHIF) to implement it.



Go Red for Women event motivates women to be heart healthy.

Cooking classes and health presentations start being offered throughout the community to educate and empower community members toward heart health.



Grand Rounds educational events begin for New Ulm health care providers.

First Jingle Bell Jam 4-mile walk/race.



First heart health screening season ends with 5,198 people screened.

Go Red for Women event and workout with fitness expert Chris Freytag.

"What's Cooking New Ulm?" television show debuts on local cable access



Project name is expanded to Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project.

Food environment assessments start at convenience stores, then grocery stores and restaurants.

Community Health Challenge: *Get Active* launches and HONU starts using volunteer district leaders in its efforts.



Allina approves budget for The Heart of New Ulm Project.

Apr 2008    June 2008    Feb 2009    May 2009    Dec 2009    Feb 2010    June 2010

May 2008    Oct 2008    Apr 2009    Nov 2009    Jan 2010    Mar 2010    July 2010



Vice president of education at MHIF, Jackie Boucher, forms a community steering committee in New Ulm with key community leaders and drafts a proposal for Allina to approve budget for project.



Community Health Challenge: *Move to Improve* launches.

First heart health screening season starts — open to the entire community and all worksites.



Second Annual Community Summit and First Community Leader Summit with Bob Harper from NBC's "The Biggest Loser."

HONU receives funds from the federal appropriation bill thanks to support from U.S. Rep. Tim Walz and staff from U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar's office.



Bavarian Blast 5k walk/run and 10k run.

A diversity of new community programs start throughout the community with the help of district leaders, such as walking clubs and others.



First Annual Community Summit with Dan Buettner from *The Blue Zones* launches project to the community.

*Holiday Trimmings* is offered as the first wellness program at worksites. A variety of additional wellness programs for worksites are later created and offered consistently throughout the following years.

Grocery store tours for the community begin and are offered consistently throughout the years.





Third Annual Community Summit with Danny Cahill, Season 8 winner of NBC's "The Biggest Loser: Second Chances."



FoodWorks Restaurant Program event gathers local restaurants

to participate in program to increase the number of healthy practices offered in their establishments.



HONU receives USDA grant for Farmers Market Promotion Program thanks to the support from U.S. Rep. Tim Walz, U.S. Sen. Al Franken and several community partners.

Community Health Challenge: *Six-Week Jump Start to Losing Weight* launches with motivational messaging from Danny Cahill.



HeartBeat Connections Program is launched to serve people at higher risk for a heart attack through phone coaching sessions.



Community Health Challenge *Take Five!* launches.

Second heart health screening season starts — open to the entire community and all worksites.



Second heart health screening season ends with 3,202 people screened.

Aug 2010

Oct 2010

Jan 2011

Mar 2011

May 2011

Oct 2011

Dec 2011

Sept 2010

Dec 2010

Feb 2011

Apr 2011

July 2011

Nov 2011

Feb 2012



FoodWorks Convenience Store Snack SWAP campaign launches.

HONU presents promising early results at the American College of Cardiology's 60th Annual Scientific Session and Expo in New Orleans showing a 24 percent decrease in heart attacks over 15 months.



Fourth Annual Community Summit and Food Expo featuring Jump with Jill, "The Rockstar Nutritionist."



FoodWorks Restaurant Program launches with nine participating restaurants.

*Holiday Trimmings* launches to the entire community (formerly a worksite program only).

Third Jingle Bell Jam 4-mile walk/race.



Community Health Challenge: *Color Your Plate* launches.

Riverblast 5k walk/run.



Second Jingle Bell Jam 4-mile walk/race.



HONU receives Award of Excellence for Conference Theme Poster at the 36th Annual National Wellness Conference.



Food Works Convenience Store Beverage SWAP campaign launches.

# A bright future is ahead



Jackie Boucher  
MS, RD, CDE

In 2008, when we held our first meeting about the Heart of New Ulm Project, community leaders emphasized, “When residents of New Ulm get on board with a program, they *really* get on board!” And that statement certainly rings true. Year after year, I’ve had the opportunity to see greater engagement, hear heartwarming success stories, appreciate the deep commitment of our volunteers, and continually learn from the staff and residents of New Ulm.

In 2011, we continued to achieve high participation in programs, saw exceptional outcomes, and took steps to change the environment through the launch of our restaurant and convenience store programs. We achieved national recognition for our collective efforts and were even invited to present on the project at the office of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ national coordinator for Health Information Technology, Dr. Farzad Mostashari. All of this progress is pointing to a bright future in the years ahead. In 2012, expect publication of a story about the project in the *Wall Street Journal*, a story in *Better Homes and Gardens’ Diabetic Living* magazine, and more.

Our amazing project outcomes have also led to future funding for the project. The United Health Foundation is funding our next Community Health Challenge, as well as the expansion of our work with restaurants, grocery stores and convenience stores. We plan to explore additional policy work, such as tobacco-free parks or housing, and policies that promote walking, bicycling and active lifestyles. Our goal is to make the *healthy* choice — eating well and being active — the *easy* choice.

Many of you may have heard of the Framingham Heart Study, which is one of the most famous epidemiologic studies. It provided important information on how to identify individuals at high risk for a heart attack, and created tools that have been critical to today’s approach to treating people.

In the future, our hope is that the Heart of New Ulm Project will be equally famous as this study. While Framingham gathered the data, HONU is showing the world how to act on the data. We hope to contribute knowledge on the best programs and policies that can help people prevent risk factors for heart disease from ever developing. Together, we’re working to develop strategies that other communities can use to improve the health of their residents, and also working with employers and the health care system to create new models of care delivery for those who do develop risk factors.

To be innovative, expect change in this project to be a constant. Benjamin Franklin once said, “When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.” We want this project to continue for many more years and we need your help. We need you to keep getting involved, and keep giving us your ideas on how we can continue to improve the program or integrate it with other initiatives in the community.

Thanks for the opportunity to be a part of your success. I look forward to hearing from all of you about your personal successes and your ideas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jackie Boucher". The script is fluid and cursive.

Jackie Boucher, MS, RD, CDE, project director, Heart of New Ulm Project

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**While the famous Framingham Heart Study gathered the data, HONU is showing the world how to act on the data.**

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# Our 2011 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, 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  
Joyce Tollefson, Our Savior's Lutheran Church  
Verna Walters, 3M  
Lori Weinberg, Windings Inc.

## Thank you to our 2011 sponsors

### Fourth Annual Community Summit:

Cash Wise Foods  
Natural Hi-Maize Resistant Starch

### Worksite Summit:

International Brotherhood of  
Electrical Workers  
National Electrical Contractors Association

### Farmers Market Program Partners:

Growing Green at Putting Green, Inc.  
Guldan Family Farm  
KNUJ Radio  
New Ulm Medical Center  
University of Minnesota  
University of Minnesota Extension



Jill Jayne, a registered dietitian, performs the interactive "Jump with Jill" Rock 'n Roll Nutrition Show for both kids and adults at the Fourth Annual Community Summit and Food Expo.

# About our partners

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

**Allina Hospitals & Clinics** is a not-for-profit system of hospitals, clinics and other health care services, providing care throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Allina owns and operates 11 hospitals including New Ulm Medical Center, more than 90 clinics, and health care services including home care, hospice and palliative care, oxygen and medical equipment, pharmacies and emergency medical transportation.

**Allina's Center for Healthcare Innovation** researches and incubates new ideas, care models and treatments to transform health and health care. In doing so, it advances Allina's strategic vision to improve patient care and serve as a catalyst for change in health care locally and nationally. Allina's goal is to become a national leader in creating innovative, sustainable models of care and sharing best practices and innovation.

**The Minneapolis Heart Institute** at Abbott Northwestern Hospital is recognized internationally as one of the world's leading providers of heart and vascular care. Its programs address the full range of heart health needs: prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.

**The Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation** was established in 1982 by a group of cardiologists from the Minneapolis Heart Institute, who recognized that the finest heart care for patients needed to be supported by an enduring commitment to education and research. The foundation is among the top ten clinical cardiovascular research and education institutions in the country. Their mission is to promote and improve cardiovascular health, quality of life and longevity for all — to create a world without heart disease.

## The Heart of New Ulm Project Team

Gretchen Benson, RD, CDE,  
Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation  
Jackie Boucher, MS, RD, CDE,  
Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation  
Heather Britt, MPH, PhD, Allina Hospitals &  
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Clinics, Center for Healthcare Innovation  
Charles Stephens, MD, New Ulm Medical Center

# Grüssen aus New Ulm/Greetings from New Ulm,

I, Hermann, mighty Chief of the Cherusci Tribe, conquered a Roman imperial army in the Teutoburg Forest of northern Germany in 9 A.D. I have become a symbol of strength and unity in preserving freedom. I've received national and international recognition: The Congress of the United States designated my Monument to be an official symbol for the contributions of Americans of German heritage.

I was reborn here and raised in 1897 to oversee and protect the people of New Ulm. They gave me a strong steel body inside a sheath of copper. But alas, I was heartless.

During my centennial physical examination it became apparent that my internal structure had grown perilously weak. So, in 2004 I was taken down from my pedestal, repaired and given a real heart.

My new heart, made of finest copper, contains these important symbols: A vial of soil from my battlefield in Germany; records of the hundreds of American countrymen who contributed to my repair; and the names of all the schoolchildren in the area. It is inscribed "Hermann, 9 A.D., A Freedom Fighter, Born Again in New Ulm, Minnesota USA, 2004."

When the Heart of New Ulm Project was established in 2009 I was eager to participate for my own good, and the good of the people I now serve. To my surprise and dismay, my 2011 Heart of New Ulm Lifestyle Score was an eight, not a perfect 10, because I was inactive. After all, I'd been standing here for 114 years.

In my line of work, standing on my Monument, exercise time is hard to find. Now, in the dark of night when all my townspeople are asleep, I run up and down the 99 steps in my base for 30 minutes. Clothed in heavy armor as I am, it gives me a good daily workout.

Now I would like my New Ulm brethren to join me in 2012 as I strive to raise my Lifestyle Score to become and stay a perfect 10.

*Gut gesund/Good health,*

*Hermann*



Hearts Beat Back: 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.

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