

Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc.



## NEWS

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### **Hospitals Serve Community Health Needs**

*Thousands of programs offered, millions of dollars spent to improve health status*

**MADISON (October 18, 2006)** ----- A nurse intervenes and prevents an infant from dying of malnutrition in Milwaukee. A man learns that he has prostate cancer at a free health screening in Medford, and credits that test for saving his life. A Sauk City woman struggling with an aggressive form of cancer learns she qualifies for a charity care program. Children who are obese receive special care through a weight-loss program established in Racine.

What do these stories have in common? All are free services sponsored by community hospitals. Last year, Wisconsin hospitals provided almost a billion dollars in health care services and educational programming that improved the health status of the communities they serve.

This year the Wisconsin Hospital Association surveyed its 132 member hospitals and asked them to describe and quantify the programs, services, and activities that they provide at or below cost, solely because those programs fulfill a health need in the community. Wisconsin is the first state in the nation to have all hospitals voluntarily report on the quality, safety, and price of care. Now, consumers can also learn more about the valuable educational classes, free clinics and bill assistance programs and other health services hospitals offer at a new Web site [www.wiservepoint.org](http://www.wiservepoint.org).

According to the WHA Community Benefits Report, hospitals sponsored more than 50,000 community education and outreach programs in 2005 on topics ranging from asthma education to women's health, spending more than \$20 million on those activities. More than 20,000 people participated in cancer screenings, and 30,000 people received free diabetes testing. Hospitals underwrote nearly \$7 million and logged more than 80,000 visits at free and reduced fee clinics.

In total, Wisconsin hospitals provided almost \$160 million in charity care (at cost), and sustained more than \$500 million in Medicaid losses. The loss on Medicaid is the difference between what it costs hospitals to provide care to patients in this program, and the amount of reimbursement they receive from the state of Wisconsin. In addition, the 36 hospitals that operate nursing homes lost over \$15 million on those operations.

"Whether it is providing financial assistance to patients with limited resources through charity care programs, or improving the access to essential or preventive health care services by sponsoring free clinics and health screenings, hospitals fulfill their missions by helping people live safer and healthier lives," said Wisconsin Hospital Association President Steve Brenton.

### Quick Facts from the WHA 2006 Hospital Community Benefits Report:

- Wisconsin hospitals reported spending nearly a hundred million dollars in 2005 on medical education. Hospitals donated space for clinical training, provided instructors to teach classes, and trained new physicians and nurses on-site with experienced medical staff.
- Parish nursing programs reached 138,000 people in Wisconsin in 2005.
- Nearly 80,000 people in Wisconsin participated in a hospital-sponsored support groups. Cancer support groups were the largest, with 12,652 participants, 7,761 people participated in a diabetes support group, while 4,806 attended a substance abuse support group.
- Hospitals provide 457 adult day care programs, reaching 2,567 individuals.
- Wisconsin hospitals provided 234,000 Meals-on-Wheels at a cost of \$700,000.
- This is the first year that WHA has conducted a community benefit survey. WHA recognizes that because this was the first year, data was not available for all the community benefit programs and services that occurred in 2005.
- There are several on-line resources that consumers will find helpful.
  - [www.wicheckpoint.org](http://www.wicheckpoint.org) -- Features information related to the quality and safety of care that is provided in Wisconsin hospitals.
  - [www.wipricepoint.org](http://www.wipricepoint.org) -- Provides information related to hospital charges, utilization and payer mix.
  - [www.wiservepoint.org](http://www.wiservepoint.org) -- Learn more about the programs and services that every hospital in Wisconsin hospitals offer in their communities, including personal stories that more clearly illustrate the impact that hospitals have on people.

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Note to news media: The examples used in the lead of this story, and many more patient stories are posted at [www.wiservepoint.org](http://www.wiservepoint.org). Call Mary Kay Grasmick at WHA (608-274-1820) or your local hospital's public relations or communication department for more information.