Returning to school during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forward many changes in how we approach our daily activities, and the return of school can introduce new challenges. Marshfield Clinic Health System teams have been working to provide our patients and visitors resources and information to use that may help offset some of those challenges ahead.

Shine365 blog post

Marshfield Children's Pediatrician Dr. Nicole Giles, with expertise of Infection Prevention's Michelle Kaiser, share five tips for going back to in-person school safely in our Shine365 healthy living blog. These tips focus on aspects being advocated to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our everyday lives – social distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting and symptom checks. The blog post stresses why it's important to stay home when you do not feel well and continue routine wellness visits.

Masking statement

Beyond the article, the Health System has released a statement expressing strong support that masks should be mandated in schools for teachers and students. Face masking is a proven and simple step to decrease the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We stand behind school administrators and public health departments to make schools as safe as possible through face masking requirements.

As a Health System, we recognize the health circumstances where wearing a mask isn't feasible and exemptions can be made. Good examples of these circumstances include, children under the age of two, and individuals who have difficulty breathing, are incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a mask without assistance. We also understand there is a level of anxiety among parents, teachers and students who are seeking mask exemptions. It is our position that those individuals discuss their medical condition with their provider and identify ways they can safely wear masks, or refrain from in-person school activities.

Community resource

In addition, the Center for Community Health Advancement released a Back to School 2020 guide that contains tips and resources for parents whose children are returning to school this fall, whether in-person or virtually.

This guide takes a deeper dive in keeping kids healthy at school, but also helps prepares for a successful at-home learning experience. This guide also addresses emotional needs of children during this time.
Please share with patients, family and friends who may benefit from these resources. Our teams worked hard to put together accurate and up-to-date information on how to navigate through this year’s school season.
Community support fund helps provide essential supplies to people in need

A $1,000 charitable contribution from the Marshfield Clinic Health System/Security Health Plan COVID-19 Community Support Fund has given the Northwoods Share (NWS) Needs Pantry in Eagle River a welcome boost.

The funds have helped the non-profit service organization ensure it has sufficient supplies through this summer to serve clients who face even tougher times due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“By things you have provided through your generosity, you are touching lives of people in the Northwoods at a very basic level and they very much appreciate it,” said Doug Ralston, NWS.

Many NWS clients were unemployed, receiving unemployment or had work hours reduced during the COVID-19 stay-at-home period, meaning less money for groceries and household items.

This contribution helped NWS stock necessary household and personal hygiene products, allowing families to focus on purchasing food.

According to Ralston, it was a great help to families find these items when some stores did not have them or were running low. NWS also helped families maintain a healthy home by providing cleaning and sanitizing supplies.

The Needs Pantry, along with the other facets of NWS, serves around 250-350 families per month in eastern Vilas County and a portion of western Oneida County. During the COVID-19 stay-at-home order, less than a hundred per month were served. In June and July, those numbers increased to 122 families and 177 families respectively, which shows a marked uptick in need as clients began their “new normal.”

“When our clients come through the drive-through line, we greet them, ask them how things are going, give them products, take prayer concerns, sometimes pray with them and find out what’s going on in their lives,” Ralston said. “Invariably, they say ‘thank you’ for the friendly face, short conversation and products they received. They smile and take away a sense that someone cares.”

Besides the Needs Pantry, NWS includes:

- IC HELP – emergency or spot financial assistance to clients for rent, car repairs, utilities, etc. One-on-one socially-distanced interviews are conducted.
- Community dinners – free meals twice monthly to those willing to come. This has changed from being served inside to prepared, prepackaged foods given free via drive-through.
- Gently-used clothing - given free to those in need.

The Pantry continues to rely on donations to support area families. For more information, visit northwoodshare.org.
Dr. Winiarczyk honored as 2020 Rural Health Ambassador

Katherine Winiarczyk, M.D., internal medicine and palliative care provider at Marshfield Medical Center-Ladysmith, was recognized with the 2020 Rural Hospital Ambassador Award Tuesday, Aug. 18.

The Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) established the Rural Health Ambassador Award in 2004 to recognize employees at member hospitals who have gone above the call of duty in promoting their respective organizations and made significant contributions to rural health care in general.

Jeremy Levin, director of advocacy for RWHC, presented Dr. Winiarczyk with a certificate and token of appreciation at the award ceremony. Levin noted Dr. Winiarczyk’s community impact included being a keynote speaker at an event for Memory Care Consortium, and involvement with the Ladysmith hospital’s teddy bear clinic.

“It was stated in your nomination that you continually express and exhibit passion for delivering high quality care to your rural community,” Levin said. “We thank you and congratulations.”

Dr. Winiarczyk said she is very thankful to receive this recognition, and to the Health System for allowing her to take on those “adventures” to give back to her hometown community.

Dr. Winiarczyk is a native to the Ladysmith community and graduated from Ladysmith High School. Her passion for complex diseases and the opportunity to shadow Dr. Ron Charipar during high school and college motivated her to pursue her interest in internal medicine.

Upon completing her education, Dr. Winiarczyk followed through with her original intent and returned to her hometown of Ladysmith. When Marshfield Medical Center-Ladysmith Chief Administrative Officer Jeff Euclide interviewed Dr. Winiarczyk, he asked her, “Why Ladysmith for your practice?” Her response was, “I want to take care of the community that raised me. It’s the passion in my life.”
Euclide said that still rings true today, and it's why she is receiving the Rural Health Ambassador recognition. “I'm proud I get to work with you every day and I get to partner with you on the future care that we provide.”

Also, at the award ceremony, Brandon Parkhurst, M.D., adult primary care service line medical director, said that he can see the passion for rural care in Dr. Winiarczyk.

“It's apparent in everything you do,” said Dr. Parkhurst. “In every interaction, you reflect that passion to us as leaders at Marshfield Clinic and to those patients that you serve. You are dependable, and you are willing to support your colleagues, your community and the organization – that means a lot me and to Marshfield Clinic Health System.”

Congratulations to Dr. Winiarczyk on this outstanding achievement.