

Review & Commentary on Health Policy Issues for a Rural Perspective – September 1st, 2007

Profile of a Rural Community Success Story

From “Innovative Community Partnerships: Jackson County’s proACTIVE Wellness Initiative by Liz Lund, Business Development Manager, Black River Memorial Hospital in rural Wisconsin (for more info contact Liz at (715) 284-1386 or lundl@brmh.net):

Jackson County recognizes that strategies and approaches to overcome obesity and preventable health problems cannot be developed and implemented by health agencies alone. This summary describes a community initiative that is successfully incorporating the hospital, public health, school district, and local businesses to build and launch worksite wellness programs that are making a difference.

Jackson County’s Public Health Department initiated the CRUNCH Campaign Committee in October 2003 and has been convening community partners to develop strategies to reduce obesity ever since. A subcommittee formed in 2005 to research community wellness behaviors and needs. Data was gathered from the following populations: youth, working adults, disabled, and elderly. Of the working population, 21% noted no current physical activity with 52% not achieving the recommended level of exercise. Time, energy, and childcare were most often cited as deterrents to maintaining good wellness habits. Needs identified included: Programming to accommodate the working population and work-site wellness programs.

Because of these findings, the partners determined to focus on worksites. In 2006, the collaborating partners sought additional members, became the proACTIVE Wellness Initiative (pAWI), and applied for implementation funds under the direction of Black River Memorial Hospital (BRMH) and the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health (WORH). WORH funded three rural county initiatives targeting worksite populations: Jackson, Hayward, and Sauk Counties. Each was invited to take part in a statewide Strong Rural Communities Initiative (SRCI) so that information could be shared and analyzed.

In 2006, the proACTIVE Wellness Initiative designed two unique wellness programs for D&S Manufacturing and the Black River Falls (BRF) School District. Hart Tie & Lumber operated as the control in this project—health risk assessments were conducted; however, no intervention was implemented.

At the onset, wellness surveys, Health Risk Assessments (HRA’s), and food and exercise diaries were instrumental in determining health indicators and providing measures for improvement in behavioral habits relative to fitness and nutrition. Private consultations were held with each participant, discussing individual results and setting realistic goals to overcome any noted deficiencies.

Participants then completed nine weeks of programming held at the worksite on work time. Nine weekly programs covered a wide range of areas: nutrition, weight loss, cooking, everyday exercise, fitness training, tobacco use, stress management, depression, and local wellness resources. Related challenges and incentives were proposed each week along with a 2-month voluntary fitness challenge. One-on-one coaching, weigh-ins, and blood pressure checks with pAWI’s Worksite Wellness Program Coordinator were options for all participants to monitor progress, applaud successes, and address challenges.

Approximately six months after the onset, HRA’s and Wellness Surveys were repeated to determine whether the educational programming, challenges, incentives, and coaching had a positive impact on behaviors and health status. Food and exercise diaries were repeated so any changes in behavior could be further quantified.

Outcomes—The proACTIVE Wellness Initiative:

- 1) Enhanced access to primary and preventive health services through the collaboration of local health agencies, schools and businesses.
- 2) Educated and encouraged the worksite population to establish and maintain healthy lifestyles using supportive employers as an effective agency.

SOME INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT BEHAVIORAL changes and improvements. D&S Manufacturing had an impact with tobacco users as six participants have successfully quit. When comparing the total number of HRA results in the high to extreme categories, results either stayed the same or improved except for cholesterol tests within the control site. When individual screening tests and wellness survey results are reviewed, improvements can be verified, showing that behavioral impacts were made—more so when intervention was implemented. A secondary benefit included positive influences on spouses, family, co-workers and students at BRF schools.

Involvement of the business community and the long-term potential to reduce health care costs is a particular emphasis of this initiative. Through this program, area businesses are becoming more cognizant of the benefits of a healthier workforce—increased productivity, reduced turnover and fewer lost workdays due to chronic illness and fatigue. In turn, healthier employees will reduce health care costs and insurance premiums. The employers have proven to be an effective agency to encourage healthy lifestyles within Jackson County and are committed to promoting primary and

preventive healthcare services to their employees. This project continues to gain support as community members are learning of its effect.

Partners—The proACTIVE Wellness Initiative Committee members are dedicated to sharing their expertise to make this project a success. BRMH's Therapy Department provided input for fitness education and surveys; Ho-Chunk Nation Nutritional Services Department and BRF School District provided input for nutritional components; BRMH's ER Nurse Manager and Employee Health Coordinator along with the Public Health Department and BRF School District Nurse provided expertise for the HRA's, Screenings, and programming; a Worksite Wellness Coordinator has assisted in coordinating the project, as well as monitoring and coaching participants for program adherence; BRMH's Business Development Manager developed many of the tools and processes, compiled data, and directed the program; and the participating employers allowed employees to participate on work time and were prominently engaged in the design, implementation, and evaluation of



RURAL HEALTH CAREERS WISCONSIN

the programs. Other partners connected through the CRUNCH Campaign Committee that are not listed include: UW-Extension and Western Dairyland.

The pAWI meets regularly with other SRCI, sharing and learning from their challenges and successes. The WORH is utilizing the Center for Health Systems Research & Analysis (CHSRA) to evaluate these coalitions. CHSRA's results are pending; however, because of this project, partnerships with other health agencies and area businesses have been enhanced, employers are becoming more involved in promoting health, and a liaison between health care services and the community is strengthening. In the communities' eyes, these partnerships are being formed not only to benefit from each other's resources, but to benefit the community. This is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

The pAWI continues its work with two new worksites in 2007: Regal Beloit Motor Technologies and another division of the Black River Falls School District, and looks forward to another year of improvements.

The Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) was begun in 1979 as a catalyst for regional collaboration, an aggressive and creative force on behalf of rural health and communities. RWHC promotes the preservation and furthers the development of a coordinated system of health care, which provides both quality and efficient care in settings that best meet the needs of rural residents in a manner consistent with their community values.

Eye On Health Editor:

Tim Size, RWHC

880 Independence Lane, PO Box 490

Sauk City, WI 53583

office@rwhc.com

<http://www.rwhc.com>

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AROUND THE COUNTRY

ProACTIVE Wellness Initiative: Helping Wisconsin Workers Get Fit

by Candi Helseth

Employees at D&S Manufacturing in Black River Falls, Wis., are healthier these days, since participating in a worksite wellness initiative.

Of the 53 D&S employees who voluntarily participated in the proACTIVE Wellness Initiative (pAWI) in 2006, six quit smoking, 20 decreased their blood sugar levels and 15 lost an average of eight pounds each during the nine-week program. Overall, the group recorded a 5.1 percent decrease in both cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

Coordinated by Black River Memorial Hospital and funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Fund For a Healthy Future through the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health (WORH), pAWI was developed in 2006. Liz Lund, business development manager at Black River Memorial Hospital, said surveys on community wellness behaviors and needs in 2005 had revealed that two of the top five needs related to worksite wellness.



Emilio Juarez, shown here at work at D&S Manufacturing, says that the pAWI program has helped him get fit.

"Wisconsin is 22nd in the nation for adult obesity, and of the working population surveyed in Jackson County, time, energy and lack of childcare were most often cited as deterrents to maintaining good wellness habits," Lund said. "Twenty percent noted no current physical activity with 52 percent not achieving the recommended level of exercise. There was a clear need for programming to accommodate the working population."

D&S, Black River Falls School District and Hart Tie & Lumber were the first sites selected to participate. All three businesses are located in Black River Falls, which has about 3,600 residents. pAWI began by conducting employee health risk

assessments at each site. Follow-up programming was held at D&S and the school. Hart Lumber served as a control in the study, so no interventions were implemented there.

Employees at D&S, which manufactures large-scale components, assemblies and other metal parts, showed measurable outcomes. In addition, the employees reported positive changes such as adopting regular exercise habits, eating healthier and getting established with a health care provider.

"I eat three healthy meals a day now and I eat better foods I didn't eat before," said Emilio Juarez, a D&S employee whose cholesterol levels returned to the normal range. "I push myself at my job to work harder physically. I kind of make my job a game for me, to help me get more exercise and stay more fit."

"We saw successes even in the assessment phase," Lund said. "A lot of the men at D&S never went to a doctor. Many male participants had never seen a provider for preventive services. When results showed any areas of high risk, we attempted to get those individuals connected with a physician."

A participant whose screening revealed high blood sugar was referred to a physician, diagnosed with diabetes and placed on medication. By the time he completed the wellness program, he had changed his diet and exercise sufficiently enough that he was able to stop the medication.

Worksite programming covered a wide range of areas, including nutrition, weight loss, cooking, exercise, fitness training, tobacco use, stress management, depression and local wellness resources. Participants competed as teams. Coaching, weigh-ins and blood pressure checks monitored individual progress. Incentives and prizes encouraged participants to stay motivated and practice good habits at home too.

"Even mentally, the program helped me improve," Juarez said. "Fifteen years ago I had a brain aneurysm and it left my memory damaged. In the program, I learned some things to help me stay more alert."

Wisconsin Partnership funding covered participation costs for 25 participants at each work site. D&S paid employees during work hours, and also paid registration costs for the additional 28 employees.

"We saw it as a sound investment," said D&S President Mike Dougherty. "We may not be able to quantify our investment for years down the road, but if we're going to do something about controlling health costs, one of the best things we can do is encourage wellness among employees. Health care costs have gone from being a minor benefit cost to our third largest expense behind labor and materials."

Employees at all three worksites experienced improvements, but improvements were higher overall in the two businesses where follow-up programs and coaching

were implemented, Lund said.

A secondary benefit included the number of spouses and family members who made behavioral changes. Dougherty said D&S employees who hadn't been physically active were out walking with their spouses at night. The wife of a smoker quit when he did. Most importantly, Dougherty noted, the initiative fostered long-term commitment. A D&S employee committee continues programs and incentives to maintain motivation for healthy lifestyle changes.

Healthier employees reduce the burden of health care costs and insurance premiums, Lund said. Through the program, area businesses are becoming more cognizant of healthy workforce benefits, such as increased productivity, reduced turnover and fewer lost workdays due to chronic illness and fatigue.

pAWI, which includes several community partners in addition to WORH, is bringing worksite wellness programs to additional area businesses in Jackson County. The program is being funded through February 2009.

For more information, contact Liz Lund, Business Development Manager, Black River Memorial Hospital, by phone 715-284-1386 or email lundl@brmh.net.

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Worksite wellness partnership continues

During the past two years, businesses in the Jackson County area have been participating in health and wellness activities and programs through the proACTIVE Wellness Initiative (pAWI). The grant-funded pAWI is being administered through Black River Memorial Hospital's (BRMH's) Business Development Department staff. To date, D&S Manufacturing; Hart Tie & Lumber; the Black River Falls School District, including the Bus Garage; High School, Third Street and Forrest Street Elementary School; and Majestic Pines Casino; and Regal Beloit Motor Technologies have participated.

Liz Lund, manager of the Business Development Department, says the primary objectives of pAWI are to improve or maintain good nutrition and fitness habits and encourage early detection and prevention of lifestyle problems that could lead to chronic illnesses. Provided at the worksites were health risk assessment screening, education sessions, one-on-one coaching activities.

Regal Beloit completed the pAWI nearly a year ago, but it is continuing to be proactive by partnering with BRMH and offering its employees several wellness activities. Plant Manager Tom Gundrum says Regal Beloit is a great place to work and "partnering with the hospital with wellness activities shows we care for our people and want them to be healthy and happy."

This past May, a one-day Poker Walk/Run for Wellness was held; employees who walked five laps around their facility, which equated 2.5 miles, received a poker hand of five cards. If they did laps beyond the required five, they could exchange a card in their hand. Nineteen employees participated, and the top eight poker-hand winners received a summer membership to the Lunda Community Center. In addition, a \$25 gas card was given to Misael Rosario, the top winner.

Another unique wellness activity Regal Beloit offered its employees this summer was a "Walk to the Dells" competition in which employees who walked 75 miles in seven weeks earned the chance to have their name entered in a drawing for a Wisconsin Dells package. The hospital's Business Development Department staff coordinated the event, and the grand prize package that included an overnight stay at the Wilderness Waterpark Resort, a gift certificate to the Uno Chicago Grill and tickets for Adventure Golf at Pirate's Cove. In addition, any employee who walked at least 30 miles received a gift card for a salad from McDonalds.

Fourteen employees completed more than 75 miles and the grand prize winner was Melissa Nortman.

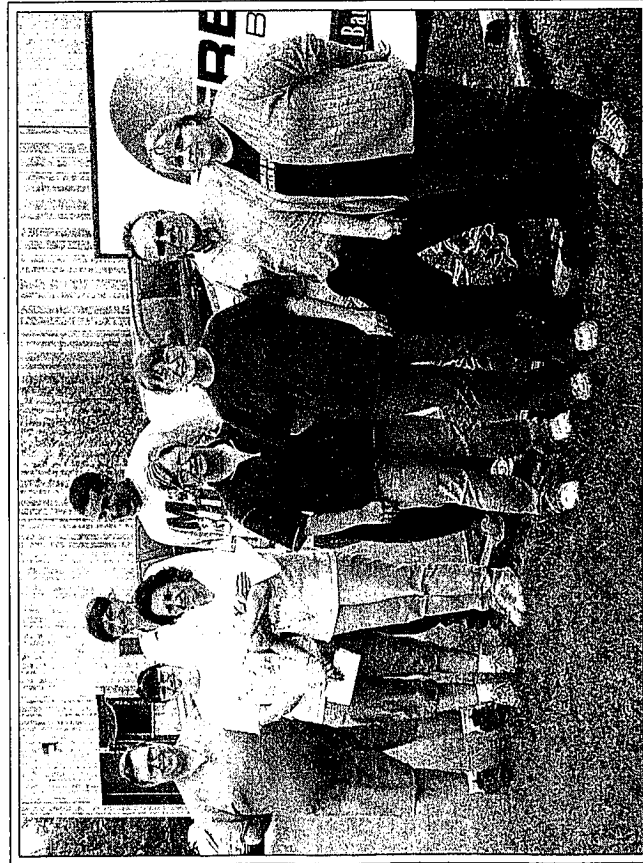
In June, a five-minute chair massage by Erin Johnson's Magic Touch was offered to employees. This was so popular massages are now being offered monthly by Kathy Peterson, PTA, of the hospital's Rehabilitation Services

Department. The hospital also prepared and compiled a Wellness Interest Survey for employees to provide feedback as Regal Beloit continues to build its wellness programs. As an incentive, a \$50 gas card was drawn from all the completed surveys, and Niva Dietz was the lucky winner.

Other employee wellness activities happening at Regal Beloit include the start of a "Recipe of the Month" program, in which samples of healthy recipes will be prepared by employees for others to taste, and Connie Seiber, DTR, CD, from the Black River Falls School District, will do a presentation on "Healthy Cooking."

In addition, Business Health Services staff conducts monthly biometric screenings that measure blood pressure, body composition, glucose and cholesterol for Regal Beloit's new hires and will be doing audiology screenings for its OSHA Hearing Conservation Program.

Lund says Worksite Wellness Programs benefit both the employee and the employer. "Improved health and well-being of employees equates to decreased absences, increased productivity and contained health care costs for the employer," she says. "It is a win-win initiative for all involved."



Contributed photo

The winners and placements of Regal Beloit's first annual Poker Walk/Run with General Manager Tom Gundrum, second from right, were, from left, Todd Wilkinson, third; Lori Paar, second; Lynda Pucek, eighth; Alvina Peil, fourth; Misael Rosario, first; Angie Flick, sixth; Sue Voeller, fifth; and Peggie Busse, seventh.

Motorist damages railroad-crossing arm

By Pat McKnight

The eastside crossbar of the Canadian Northern Railroad controlling traffic traveling along STH 95 received damage when a motorist failed to stop for a descending stop arm. Todd D. Densmore of Park Ridge Road, not feel he could stop before striking the crossbar.

He tried to avoid a collision with the cross arm and west on STH 95 Aug. 11 when he saw the flashing lights and stop arm lowering. He told the Jackson County Sheriff's Department deputy he did not feel he could stop before striking the crossbar.

Whitehall, was traveling west on STH 95 Aug. 11 when he saw the flashing lights and stop arm lowering. He told the Jackson County Sheriff's Department deputy he did not feel he could stop before striking the crossbar.

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proACTIVE Wellness Initiative reaches area employees

Since May, the proACTIVE Wellness Initiative has been working with employees at the Ho-Chunk Majestic Pines Casino/Hotel and is just beginning the process with employees of the Black River Falls Middle School and Gebhardt Elementary. For two and a half years, Liz Lund, business development manager at Black River Memorial Hospital, has been the director of the pAWI grant-funded program.

Lund explains that the main objectives of pAWI are to improve or maintain favorable nutrition and fitness habits and encourage early detection of preventable chronic lifestyle-related problems. The project has been successful and has included participation from local health agencies and businesses. BRMH has provided health risk screenings, educational programs, coaching sessions and other wellness activities to participants from seven dif-

ferent area business locations.

The participating employees from Majestic Pines completed an initial health risk assessment that included a comprehensive blood test. Next they were provided with a variety of interactive presentations with topics that included the hazards of tobacco, healthy cooking and nutrition, fitness and exercise, stress and depression, alternative medicine and local resources. In addition to the educational sessions, chair massages were provided by Lori Dolesy of Perfect Touch Massage.

Participants could elect to participate in weekly challenges related to the programming sessions. Several of the Majestic Pines participants also took part in team competitions to earn points for their physical activity and compete for greatest percentage of weight lost. Teams included the "Wellness

Witches," the "Fab Four," "Fightin' Fatness," and the "Health Nuts," as well as others. During programming, there were also many opportunities for participants to take part in coaching sessions provided by BRMH's Business Health Services Coordinator, Randi Arneson, RN, who provided additional support, blood pressure and weight checks, and information and motivation to address health concerns. Each participant at Majestic Pines will soon go through the health risk assessment process again to determine if any of their screenings have changed and whether or not they have a heightened awareness and improved level of activity and nutrition.

Lund says that, overall, there were positive changes in several areas for each worksite and participants had positive comments about their experience.

those experts were at the Diabetes Fair the Holiday Inn Express people registered for free event, they were to help themselves to a variety of delicious snacks and beverages.

Apples, bananas, oranges and mini bagels, fat-free cream cheese, sugar free jellies, easy to stay on track coffee and tea, fruit juice and sugar free along with ice w



The team responsible for the Diabetes Fair at the Holiday Inn Express. From left: front row, Katie Edwards, Krohn Memorial Hospital; back row, Kristal, Connie Nosbisch, Kewaunee County Public Health.



Griffin Dunn

Hello, Griffin Brunner Dunn

A son, Griffin Brunner Dunn, was born on Oct. 9, 2008, to Tyler and Nikki Dunn in Jackson, Wyo. He weighed 7 pounds 6 ounces and was 21 inches long.

Maternal grandparents are Art and Bonnie Brunner of Manitowish Waters.

Paternal grandparents are Bud and Kathy Dunn of Melrose.

Maternal great-grandmother is Lorraine Wagner of Rhineland.

Paternal great-grandmother is Elsie Young of Melrose.

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BRF School District employees participate in proACTIVE Wellness Initiative

Black River Memorial Hospital's (BRMH) Business Health Services has been working with employees from the Black River Falls Middle School (BRFMS) and Gebhardt Elementary as part of its proACTIVE Wellness Initiative (pAWI) program. This is the third and final year of the worksite wellness initiative that has been funded by the "Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future." The grant has introduced Health Risk Assessments (HRAs) from the Healics® Preventive Care Program followed by programs on nutrition, fitness, stress and various other wellness issues to employees at D&S Manufacturing, Regal Beloit Motor Technologies, Ho-Chunk Majestic Pines, five other schools or departments from the Black River Falls School District (BRFSD) and now the last two participating schools. Hart Tie & Lumber served as a control group and took part in the HRAs without the intervention of the educational and motivational program sessions.

The pAWI program has consisted of an initial health risk assessment to provide a snapshot of each participant's current overall health. Then there have been 10 weeks of educational programming, along with coaching sessions, challenges, team competitions, and at the end after about five months, a follow-up HRA. One of the objectives over the past three years of pAWI

programming has been to see if any improvements can be noted once a person becomes aware of any high risk health conditions that exist and is offered educational instruction along with one-on-one coaching. The primary goals were to encourage access to primary and preventive health services through the collaboration of local health agencies, schools and businesses; and to educate and encourage the Jackson County population to establish and maintain healthy lifestyles using supportive employers.

According to Liz Lund, pAWI director and business development manager at BRMH, "It has been common to find participants are unaware of health issues due to their lack of established medical care, and many begin seeking overdue medical attention after reviewing their results with our pAWI nurse." The program sessions presented by various area professionals, as well as the coaching sessions with Randi Arneson, RN, the business health nurse at BRMH, have helped encourage participants to make changes in their lifestyle to improve their health.

The pAWI educational programs for the BRFMS and Gebhardt Elementary participants began in October and concluded in January. The follow-up HRAs will be completed in February, the final month of this grant period. Over the past three years, pAWI findings have validated that

by knowing and understanding one's own health status, attending educational sessions related to making behavioral improvements, and keeping connected with a wellness coach in order to set and reach realistic goals, an employee's health status can effectively be impacted.

The HRA summary report gives each participant a score based on the results of their laboratory tests and biometric measurements. The better the results, the higher the score is out of a possible 100. According to research from Healics®, each point increase results in a 1.8% savings in healthcare costs. Among the various businesses that the pAWI worked with during 2006-2008, several individuals increased their Healics® HRA score. One participant had an increase of 40 points in just five months after losing 20 pounds and lowering glucose, triglycerides and blood pressure as a result. Another had an increase of 30 points after uncovering a diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. At least 19 others went up 10 to 25 points by taking steps towards improving their health. Eight participants quit using tobacco and the total weight lost by 119 participants was 410 lbs - all within a four to five month period. pAWI also uses a Wellness Survey to poll each participant on their health habits and awareness before and after the entire pAWI program. All participating businesses have indicated increased activity levels and positive

changes in eating habits.

The Wellness Council of Wisconsin approximates that 65-70% of all healthcare claims are related to unhealthy behaviors. Liz Lund says, "Bringing in education, awareness, and a culture of wellness is one way employers and employees can take some control over their healthcare costs. By changing unhealthy behaviors, we can all make a difference."

One participant in the most recent group from the BRFSD stated, "This was an excellent program, as it is very important to take care of ourselves so that we can be better teachers for the kids!" Shemane Bullard of Ho-Chunk Majestic Pine's program stated, "This has been an exciting experience for me. Not only have I learned so much, but I learned something new every week. So in the end, you really change your lifestyle and your life. It's not all at one time so it's not so overwhelming to learn to change yourself."

Each year, the pAWI staff has held an awards ceremony as part of the Healthy Tastes for Jackson County event to recognize those participants who exceeded in the activity and/or weight loss competition. Others recognized have been those with the best attendance and participation in program session challenges. This year's Healthy Tastes event will be held Monday, March 9, from 4p.m. to 7p.m. at the BRFMS, and the public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

Over 400 attended Healthy Tastes for Jackson County

The third annual Healthy Tastes for Jackson County was held Monday, March 9, at the Black River Falls Middle School. The event was open to the public and sponsored by the proACTIVE Wellness Initiative (pAWI) and the Jackson County Health Alliance. Much of the funding for this event has been provided through a grant awarded to pAWI by The Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future.

This year's event attracted approximately 400 people. People attending the event were able to sample healthier menu items from local food establishments and caterers at a nominal cost and see what healthier choices they have to offer. Attendees were also entertained by The Magic of Justin Alan, relaxing harp music from Emily Row and presentations by Angie Kohlwey, RD, CD, on how to "Make Eating Out Magically Nutritious."

Food samples were provided by Helstad's Best Pork Products, Perkins Restaurant & Bakery, McDonalds, Wal-Mart Deli & Produce, Orange Moose Bar & Grill, Black River



Contributed photo

Some of the hard-working committee members and volunteers for Healthy Tastes for Jackson County were (back row, l-r) Connie Seiber, Julie Meyers, Chris Hovell, Melissa Bergerson, Kathy Harasimowicz, Lynn Overman, (middle row, l-r) Kolene Schmitzler, Patsy Elrod, Ben Anderson, (front row, l-r) Liz Lund, Kathy Rumsey, and Randi Arneson.

positive impact on the business and hopes the event will continue to be held. If so, she said Perkins would be right there.

The evening also included award presentations to the pAWI Wellness Program participants from the Ho-Chunk Nation's Majestic Pines and the Black River Falls School District. There were many door prizes donated by area businesses that were awarded throughout the evening.

Liz Lund, business development manager at Black River Memorial Hospital and director of the pAWI, extended her appreciation to the food vendors and everyone who sponsored a door prize or made a donation to help offset the cost of the event. "We are also grateful to the many volunteers who gave their time and energy to again make this a successful event," she said.

Falls School Food Services and Black River Memorial Hospital Food Services. Over 2,200 food samples were purchased by the attendees. Milk and water were again donated by the Jackson County Dairy Promotion Committee, Ripp Distributing and the Ho-

Chunk Nation Lifestyle Balance. According to Cindy Jerome, Perkins Restaurant and Bakery has participated in the event each of the three years it has been held.

Regional manager for Perkins in Black River Falls, she feels it definitely had a

'Absolute Sobriety Law' means not a drop of alcohol for drivers under 21

As warmer weather arrives, young people with a winter's worth of pent-up energy will be out in force during this upcoming season of proms, graduation parties and outdoor activities.

In their quest for spring-time fun, young drivers may be tempted to get behind the wheel after drinking. However, they must resist this temptation because Wisconsin law requires drivers under the age of 21 to maintain absolute sobriety - not even a drop of alcohol allowed - when operating a motor vehicle.

Drivers under age 21 who violate the Absolute Sobriety Law will have their license suspended for three months and must pay a \$375 citation with four demerit points assessed on their driver's license. If a passenger under the age of 16 is in the vehicle, violators will have their license suspended for six months, and they must pay \$627 with four demerit points assessed on their license.

Driving skills at any age are easily impaired with just a small amount of alcohol. But young and inexperienced drivers are much more prone to fatal and serious injury crashes after drinking. In Wisconsin, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for young people.

Banner acquisition promotes FCCLA