Here’s to your HEALTH

Fall/Winter 2010

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CARSON TAHOE Regional Healthcare
Here’s to your health.
We are living in a golden age of information technology (IT) that has profoundly impacted the way we access information, communicate, and interact with the world around us. IT continues to expand exponentially in new and exciting ways and even has life-saving potential in a medical setting. At Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare, our new electronic health records initiative is improving the speed, convenience, and safety of patient care. We are proud to be leading the way in developments that are revolutionizing the way care is delivered in Northern Nevada.

Our latest IT upgrades have improved staff communication by instantaneously updating a patient’s room location and progress of test results and procedures at the Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center. Each patient encounter at CTRH is recorded electronically and stored throughout an entire lifetime of care. This ensures a more accurate diagnosis and a complete picture of each individual’s health profile. Soon, these records will be available for download by patient request. This allows for easy transfer of information from one care provider to the next. As always, privacy is of the utmost concern so patients can rest assured that all healthcare data access complies with federal Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations.

Our new system is also fully integrated to include the laboratory and pharmacy. This allows for added safety features that alert pharmacists of patient allergies and harmful drug interactions when filling prescriptions. Additionally, all of our IV pumps have been replaced with electronic versions that are networked to a central medical library. The amount of medicine delivered through an IV is now automatically regulated based on the type of drug that is scanned into the system. Thanks to these innovations, human errors are virtually eliminated from the medication delivery process.

Staying ahead of the technological curve is crucial to the success of our goals to improve patient safety and enhance the quality and efficiency of patient care. Each and every day Carson Tahoe provides the best possible care to our patients. Improved electronic health records and the use of advanced information technology is just one more way we are ensuring the highest level of care is delivered to our community.

Sincerely,

Ed Epperson
CEO and President
Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare

For a complete system map, as well as maps and directions to all facilities, please visit us at www.carsontahoe.com and click on “Maps & Directions” at the bottom.
One Cancer Survivor’s Generosity

Betty Kopfhammer knows the importance of having access to quality healthcare in Northern Nevada. She lost her husband to cancer 15 years ago and has endured her own struggle with the disease. Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare was there for Betty during those difficult periods, and she has since demonstrated her appreciation through generous giving to the Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare (CTRH) Foundation.

The 74-year-old Carson City resident lives a self-described “happy life” and devotes herself to projects such as giving to the CTRH Foundation and supporting higher education in Northern Nevada. She began donating to the CTRH Foundation in small amounts more than 10 years ago and currently gives approximately $10,000 a year to help fund some of Carson Tahoe’s most important endeavors, including the Cancer Center Capital Campaign. Her greatest reward comes in seeing the impact her generosity has on her community hospital.

“When I give to the CTRH Foundation, I do so with love,” Betty says. “If those of us who live in this region didn’t have Carson Tahoe, we wouldn’t have much. If you can give to the hospital in any amount, I would advise you to do so because it helps those who can’t give at all.”

For information about giving opportunities and the Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare Foundation, visit www.carsontahoe.org and select “Ways To Give” or call (775) 445-5161.

Betty Kopfhammer holds the honorary degree awarded by WNC for her philanthropic support of our community.

3 Ways to Keep Fit This Winter

As the weather begins to get cooler and the layers of clothing get thicker, you may lose your drive to keep your body in tip-top shape. But just because winter is right around the corner, doesn’t mean you have to hibernate.

Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare has partnered with Fox 11, KRXI-TV Reno, to encourage you to eat healthier and exercise more through the “Move It! For Your Health” program. For this issue, here’s a look at how to avoid weight gain this winter season.

Keeping weight off during the winter months is easier than you think with these tips:

• **Get creative with exercise.** Adding exercise into your daily routine can help counterbalance the extra calories you may consume during the holidays. Winter sports such as skiing, ice-skating, or snowboarding are a great way to keep weight off. Can’t get away to the slopes? Sign up for exercise classes at the local gym or go for a walk around the neighborhood or the local mall.

  • **Maintain a healthy diet.** Between holiday parties and office gatherings, it can be hard to keep your diet on track. If you feel like indulging or don’t have access to a healthier choice—compensate. For example, fill up on nutritious veggies and then eat smaller portions of your favorite holiday fares.

  • **Team up.** Partner with a loved one to ensure you stay accountable all winter long.

To learn more about living healthier, visit www.herestoyourhealth.net.
High Five for Quality Care

Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center (CTRMC) is celebrating five years of providing the community with the highest standard of medical care.

The original vision for the new regional medical center was more than a larger footprint and a new address for Carson Tahoe. The goal was to transform Carson Tahoe Hospital into a true regional medical center offering a higher level of medical care. Today, Carson Tahoe has achieved that goal and has established itself as the premier regional healthcare provider.

“In planning, building, occupying, and utilizing the new campus, we have made good on our promise to the community—outstanding patient-focused care,” says Ed Epperson, President and CEO of Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare. “We completed the project on time and under budget with a seamless transition. Building on a history of excellence, we are still growing to serve the evolving healthcare needs of Northern Nevada.”

Local Hero

The construction of the regional medical center was the largest building project in Carson City’s history and continues to be a bright spot in the local economy.

Once the new facility was built, the former location in town was converted to provide outpatient services and a long-term acute-care facility, which added 100 jobs to the local economy.

The former residential location was hard to find and parking was difficult for patients and visitors. Now CTRMC has a more campus-like feel with easy access to all services and close proximity to the interstate.

“Nevada Business magazine voted Carson Tahoe one of the 10 Best Companies to Work For in 2009,” says Epperson. “This demonstrates to me that employees are happy with the move.”

Not Surviving, Thriving

The first five years have seen continued investment in new services and technology. The regional medical center added a comprehensive heart program and neurological services. The campus has also brought in physician practices, an elective surgery center, and the first stand-alone, accredited cancer center in Northern Nevada.

“We will continue to respond to the community’s healthcare needs, expanding our services and providing access to a wide range of specialties,” says Epperson. “CTRMC is poised to meet the healthcare needs of the community for years to come.”

For more information about CTRMC, visit www.carsontahoe.com.
“Knowing your family history of breast cancer is one of the first steps in breast cancer prevention and early detection,” says Ann Proffitt, Supervisor at the Carson Tahoe Cancer Resource Center. “Through Project Pink, Carson Tahoe works to educate the Northern Nevada community about the importance of knowing your family history of breast cancer and what it means for you.”

What Is Project Pink?
Project Pink was developed in 2009 by the Carson Tahoe Cancer Resource Center in cooperation with the Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare Foundation. Breast cancer patients are invited to attend a community outreach event with their daughters, mothers, aunts, and sisters where they learn about breast health, are taught how to do a proper self-exam, and discuss cancer genetics and family cancer history.

Project Pink is made possible through the Safeway Foundation, an organization that provides funds for breast health programs with the main priority of giving back to the communities where Safeway customers and employees live and work.

The Earlier, The Better
Experts suggest that mammograms should be performed every one to two years, beginning at age 40. However, if you have a history of breast cancer in your family, your doctor may recommend you begin receiving screenings at an earlier age.

The most common methods to detect breast abnormalities include:

• **Mammogram.** Mammograms are x-rays of the breast used to detect breast cancer at its earliest stage—before the cancer is large enough to feel or cause symptoms. Receiving regular mammograms can significantly lower your risk of dying from breast cancer.

• **Clinical breast exam.** During a clinical breast exam, physicians use their hands to check breasts for lumps or other changes.

• **Breast self-exam.** Women can conduct self breast examinations at home to check for lumps or changes in the breast tissue or underarms.

For questions or information regarding breast cancer, contact the Carson Tahoe Cancer Resource Center at (775) 445-7500.

Dr. Antoinette Cortese, Radiology Breast Specialist, explains the ins and outs of detecting breast cancer at the 2009 Project Pink event.
Chronic Heartburn’s HIDDEN DANGER

Persistent acid reflux may lead to a condition called Barrett’s esophagus. Although it is not that common, the fact that it may lead to one of the deadliest forms of cancer, esophageal adenocarcinoma, makes appropriate diagnosis and treatment crucial. Fortunately for Northern Nevada residents, a simple screening is available for diagnosing Barrett’s esophagus.

A Growing Problem

According to the National Cancer Institute, the incidence of esophageal adenocarcinoma (the type of cancer associated with Barrett’s esophagus) has risen more than 460 percent in white men and 335 percent in white women during the past three decades. Researchers suspect that the growing trend of obesity may be a factor in the increasing rates.
Barrett’s esophagus occurs when the cells that normally line the lower portion of the esophagus (called squamous cells) are replaced by a different type of cells similar to those found in the lining of the intestines.

“This change usually occurs as the result of chronic injury to the lower esophagus, the most common cause of which is acid reflux,” says Christopher R. Lynch, MD, Gastroenterologist with Gastroenterology Consultants, Ltd., and Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center. “There are countless patients in the Carson City area who take acid reducer medications regularly for gastroesophageal reflux disease [GERD] who have no idea they are at risk for Barrett’s.”

The National Institutes of Health estimates that Barrett’s affects only about 1 percent of adults in the United States, but according to Dr. Lynch, that 1 percent of adults is 30 to 40 times more likely to develop esophageal cancer than those who do not have Barrett’s. If you suffer from chronic acid reflux, consult with your physician about screening for Barrett’s esophagus.

Soothing the Symptoms of Acid Reflux

If you’re dealing with heartburn and regurgitation on a regular basis, the first step you should take is ensure these symptoms aren’t related to a serious problem such as heart disease or stomach ulcers. After a thorough evaluation, your physician may be able to prescribe a medication to help.

“Lifestyle modifications—such as losing excess weight, avoiding foods that can cause reflux, and quitting smoking—have been shown to alleviate gastroesophageal reflux disease [GERD] symptoms,” says Christopher R. Lynch, MD, Gastroenterologist with Gastroenterology Consultants, Ltd., and Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center. “Elevating the head of your bed by placing a foam wedge under your mattress or positioning blocks of wood under the legs of the bed may also help.”

Foods that may exacerbate GERD symptoms include caffeine, chocolate, mint, alcohol, and fatty foods.
Approximately 20 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with some level of depression. Not only can depression be a devastating condition for those who have it, but it also can affect the person’s friends and family members. In order to understand the disorder, it is important to take a closer look at what causes depression, how it manifests, and treatment options.

**Straight to the Source**

The origins of depression are still somewhat of a mystery to medical professionals. A single cause has not been identified as the source of the condition, and depression commonly results from a combination of factors ranging from genetics to physical health. Depression can develop based on an individual’s family history or be caused by some form of trauma, stress, or personal loss.

Regardless of its cause, depression can reveal itself through a broad range of indicators. From fatigue and irritability to trouble sleeping, the symptoms of depression can be vague and tricky to identify, making a diagnosis challenging. Some common signs of depression include:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Lack of energy
- Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Thoughts of suicide
- Weight loss

Cases of depression can vary based on the individual and may include any number of these symptoms. In order for a diagnosis to be accurate, it is vital for patients to be honest with their healthcare provider and thoroughly explain how they feel.

**Focusing on the Future**

For patients suffering from depression, brighter days are certainly ahead. In milder cases, an exercise program may help relieve symptoms, whereas for other patients, antidepressants or therapy may be prescribed. Given the personal nature of each case of depression, treatment options may vary. The key is finding the right balance for the individual.

As research continues into the sources of depression, treatment methods are certain to improve, meaning the future will hold tremendous promise for depression sufferers.

If you are experiencing symptoms of depression, contact your primary care provider. If you don’t have a doctor, visit www.carsontahoe.com and click “Find a Doctor.”

Are you suffering from fatigue, having difficulty sleeping, or feeling worthless? You may be depressed.
Fact or Fiction?  
**Busting Depression Myths**

Do you know the facts about depression? Test your knowledge to find out.

**Fact or Fiction?** Depression is not a major medical condition.  
**Answer:** Fiction. While it’s normal to be sad every once in a while, depression is actually a serious medical condition that can impact a person’s physical health.

**Fact or Fiction?** Most people who cope with depression never seek help.  
**Answer:** Fact. Only 29 percent of people dealing with depression see a mental health professional for this treatable medical condition.

**Fact or Fiction?** Depression causes people to experience physical pain.  
**Answer:** Fact. While most people are aware of the emotional symptoms of depression, such as anxiety, irritability, and hopelessness, it can also make people feel dizzy, lightheaded or nauseated, have problems sleeping.

**Fact or Fiction?** Elderly people are affected more by depression than any other age group.  
**Answer:** Fiction. While it is common for elderly people to deal with depression, middle-aged people between the ages of 40 and 59 have the highest rate of depression.

**Fact or Fiction?** When people talk about depression, it gets worse.  
**Answer:** Fiction. Participating in talk therapy with a therapist can actually alleviate symptoms of depression.

For assistance treating depression, call Carson Tahoe Behavioral Health Services at (775) 445-7756.

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### A Clear Head

There’s no better feeling than waking up in the morning relaxed, content, and ready to face the new day. Being emotionally healthy is an important part of enjoying an active, fulfilling life.

While there is no set formula for happiness, experts agree there are a few things you can do—regardless of your age—to help promote a sense of happiness and well-being in your life.

- **Taking care of your body is vital to thriving emotionally.** Be sure you’re getting plenty of exercise, sleeping enough each night, and enjoying a balanced diet.
- **Don’t underestimate the power of play.** Make time in your schedule to do things you enjoy, whether that means playing a game of golf, painting a portrait, or spending the afternoon gardening. This will help you stay happy and balanced.
- **Why not consider adopting a pet for your family?** While a furry friend can be a lot of responsibility, caring for and nurturing an animal can be a very rewarding experience.

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The Power of Laughter

Want to feel better instantly? Try telling a joke. Laughter helps your body relax and releases endorphins—chemicals in your body that promote a sense of well-being.
Keep Your Family Flu-Free

Every year, thousands of Americans suffer through flu season with fevers, sneezes, and runny noses. Help save your family from the misery of the flu with a few simple steps.

The seasonal flu can cause members of your family to be sick for days. From body aches to nausea, a bout of the flu is nothing short of miserable. In light of these symptoms, practicing seasonal flu prevention is vital. Fortunately, following these simple tips can help keep your family healthy all season long.

• With the holidays just around the corner, you’re bound to find yourself in a variety of social situations. If possible, stay away from those that are visibly sick.
• Avoid touching your eyes or mouth excessively during flu season.

One Simple Shot
The most important thing anyone can do to prevent the flu is get a flu shot. Flu shots may cause minor discomfort, but can prevent you from contracting the flu. For those who might be uncomfortable with shots, the flu vaccine is also offered through a nasal spray.

“Receiving a flu vaccine is hands down the easiest way to prevent the spread of the disease,” explains Doris Dimmitt, Epidemiologist on staff with Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare. “In conjunction with other prevention techniques, vaccinations will ensure the health of your family throughout flu season.”

For more information about the seasonal flu vaccine, call the CTRH flu shot hotline at (775) 445-5595.

Results Are In:
The 2010 Community Health Needs Assessment Is Complete

A little known but critical addition to the 2009 healthcare legislation is a directive for local healthcare providers to perform a Community Health Needs Assessment every three years. Already underway before the legislation took effect, Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare’s Community Health Needs Assessment was completed in September 2010. Carson Tahoe contracted with Professional Research Consultants, Inc., to execute the survey.

Comprehensive surveys were completed by 800 residents representing Carson City, Douglas County, Lyon County, Storey County, South Lake Tahoe, and parts of Eastern California. The results were then tabulated and compared to a study from 1999. Some bright spots surfaced, such as a decrease in breast cancer deaths and stroke mortality. Other favorable findings included an increase in seatbelt use and adults partaking more in leisure time physical activity.

The survey also found some areas of concern. More adults are skipping their routine checkups, more women are not having their annual mammograms and Pap smears, and diabetes diagnoses have increased in Carson City and Douglas County.

The total results are currently under review by CTRH and interested community groups. In order to lead to positive change throughout the region, plans are underway to prioritize needs and issues. CTRH will work closely with the Nevada Appeal to keep the community informed regarding next steps.
Turning Green: It’s a Sign of Good Health

So long, styrofoam. Farewell, standard trash cans. Goodbye, single-use food containers. Make way for compostable cutlery, easy-to-use recycling bins, and fresh, local food.

The staff of Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare is ditching unnecessary waste and saying hello to an institution-wide campaign toward environmental sustainability.

What started three years ago as a small effort to reduce CTRH’s carbon footprint has evolved into a multi-faceted, inter-departmental campaign that has the entire institution jumping on board to expand the effort and extend it into the coming years.

CTRH has already instituted a number of environmentally conscious initiatives. Here are a few that are in place and in progress.

**Green Practices Implemented in 2009**
- Placed recycling bins in the hospital’s cafes with specific designations for paper, plastic, and glass
- Submitted empty cans from CTRH’s kitchens to Waste Management for recycling
- Replaced dishwashing detergent with one lower in phosphates to reduce damage to the sewage system
- Instituted the use of compostable to-go containers and paper plates
- Designated as a drop site for the Great Basin Basket Program, a community-supported agriculture initiative allowing individuals to subscribe for weekly deliveries of fresh, locally grown produce

**Green Practices in Progress**
- Earn permission from state government to purchase field greens from local growers
- Plant a “healthy garden” on the hospital campus to cultivate organic herbs and vegetables
- Provide annual Earth Day activities in hospital cafeterias to educate the public about sustaining an environmentally healthy community

**Healthy Environments Mean Healthy Communities**

According to Kim Mason, Manager of Food and Nutrition Services for CTRH, the hospital’s sustainability team hopes that in the future they will be able to work more with Waste Management to provide more compostable sites and recycling opportunities, as well as continue working with vendors to find and use products that conserve resources.

“As a healthcare system, we are conscious of the influence we have on our environment and the people who live within it,” says Mason. “That’s why we’re taking every step we can to keep it healthy.”

To find out more about the services provided by Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare, visit www.carsontahoe.com.

**Get Fit in the Workplace**

Employees at Carson Tahoe Regional Healthcare spent the summer putting their feet to the treadmill and focusing on their waistlines in an institution-wide wellness campaign.

The Get Fit program, which began in June and wrapped up in September, combined weekly education seminars with precise body measurement data for employee participants, allowing each individual to identify his or her health needs and work with professionals to establish the practices necessary to meet them.
I am on the front lines in the battle against cancer.

Peggy Pruitt has endured a lot in her battle with breast cancer. But thanks to the support of Carson Tahoe Cancer Center, she’s never had to fight alone.

Like many in our community, Peggy’s family has a history of cancer. She watched as her mother battled the disease for years, and just one day after burying her mother’s ashes, Peggy herself was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Despite the heartbreaking loss of a parent and the devastating news of her own diagnosis, Peggy found strength and hope through the Carson Tahoe Cancer Center. Thanks to a comprehensive system of medical professionals, nationally acclaimed treatment, a network of fellow cancer survivors, and a positive, healing environment that focuses on the mind, body and soul, she got the care she needed.

Today Peggy is living cancer-free. Her last treatment was on November 20, 2007, and although she understands that it could still come back at any moment, she isn’t worried. After all, she has an entire army of cancer fighters behind her.

Carson Tahoe Cancer Center, 1600 Medical Parkway, North Carson City, 445-8000