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Embracing Challenges Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

By Gene Schadler, L.C.S.W., Superintendent

It has been two years since we first heard about the virus initially named Coronavirus and later called



COVID-19. The effects on health, social connections, mental health, and the economy are still experienced on a daily basis. During the pandemic, Evansville State Hospital has continued to provide treatment to our population despite the challenges. ESH staff continue to embrace the challenges in protecting our patient population as only 7.1% of patients at ESH got COVID-19 as of 1/1/2022 while living in congregate setting compared to 25.9 cumulative rate for the general population in Indiana.

“...we have shortened length of stay by three months from 2020...”

To help support Evansville State Hospital staff during the pandemic, the Indiana National Guard Health Recovery Support Team was called in last month to support our unit staff, Maintenance and Security. We appreciate their effort and time in supporting our work. We are living in historic times and knowing there is support, as we continue to address the pandemic and its effect, has been welcomed.

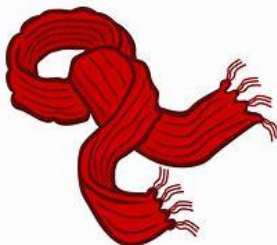
As we have gone through the year, I am proud of our services the ESH

team provides as we have shortened length of stay with our population by three months from 2020 and six months from 2019. In 2021 ESH continued efforts with Trauma Informed Care and embraced staff feedback. This feedback is driving improvement projects to help us continue to work towards Zero Harm. Likewise, the ESH team has embraced a Patient Safety Remodel project to address ligature concerns as we close one unit at a time for the remodel.

Our sincere appreciation to all staff for the spirit of teamwork to make this happen!

Giving Back – Scarves Help the Needy

Submitted By Katelyn Buzzard, Substance Abuse Counselor



In September during the hospital’s recovery month activities, many patients made scarves to donate to the homeless. These scarves along with donated gloves were dropped off at Aurora in December to help the homeless population. As soon as we unpacked them, the staff began handing them out. Aurora staff shared that many this year needed winter gear and continue to get requests for these items every day. I am so proud of the patients for working so hard to give warmth to others. What a great gesture of giving back and helping those in need!



Evansville State Hospital is a public behavioral health facility operated by the state of Indiana and one of six state psychiatric hospitals within the Family and Social Services Administration Division of Mental Health and Addiction.

Holiday Highlights

135 donors participated in the Christmas Gift Lift Program

Donors remained strong and loyal to the hospital's gift program in 2021 with 135 participating by contributing funds for shopping and purchasing popular gift items. Wish lists were given out to 47 sponsors who shopped for specific requests. Many called to inquire as to our greatest need or how to help this year to fill the patients' wish lists. Employees from Solaris Aveda Salon & Spa was just one example of these calls who responded with a collection of lounge pants, pajamas, body spray, watches, house shoes, and sweatsuits. Gifts were received in honor and memory of loved ones, some from sponsors whose legacy continues through family members. Many patients are stunned by the support "I want to thank you for the niceness you gave me for the holidays"; "I have never received so many gifts as I have here."

Many in the community continue to stock us with Christmas greeting cards, thank you! Our current supply is quite significant! Cards and stamps were received from a former patient who wrote "I had the opportunity to send cards to family and friends with Evansville providing the postage. It was an activity I really appreciated since I did not get to go home for Christmas."

Noteworthy is an anonymous donor who placed money in each patients' individual account, helping to provide for canteen funds. Noteworthy are the beautiful homemade crocheted

blankets given to patients on Geriatric Services from members of Our Saviour Lutheran Church. Noteworthy are the prayers and good wishes from Oak Hill Baptist Church who also provide canteen funds for patients on D unit. Refreshments were plentiful for the Dec 19 unit holiday parties – a variety of cakes, chips, puffed corn, and diet decaffeinated sodas. Thank you to those who contributed to the refreshments including Fairlawn United Methodist Church, East Side Lions Club, Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Friends of ESH, Oak Hill Baptist Church, and Sam's Club.

"I have never received so many gifts as I have here."

Others who contribute in ways that bring a smile to our patients are members of Holy Rosary Church, Zion Lippe United Church of Christ, Fairview Church, Mackey Salem Church, Knox County MHA, Noon Neighbors Extension Homemakers Club, St. Anne's Altar Society-St. Joe Co/St. John's, Knights of Columbus 2215-Haubstadt, and Vision Care Center employees. Theresa Woerz, Community Services Director says "there are so many little things that many do each year to pull everything together for the holidays, like those who search for those hard-to-find items, and others who wrap and help process the gifts in Community



Services." A special thank you to Doris Ragle, Sue Harrell, Brittany Gass, Bill & Bev Okey, Cathy Barnes, Britteny Adams, Kathi Goen, Megan Rech, Allyssa Vittitow, Shayne Gonzalez, and Sidney Huff.

Entertainment at the gift opening parties the week of December 13 was enjoyed by all. Music therapy staff Mindy Miller and Brandon Bertinotti led the patients in familiar Christmas carols. An impromptu play was performed at each party, complete with Santa, Mrs. Claus, and The Grinch. Hats off to staff members Andrew Hartmann, Kathi Goen, Josh Horton, and Katelyn Buzzard for taking on the lead roles. A mystery game had patients answering trivia questions to earn clues to figure out what happened to Santa's lead reindeer Rudolph who was missing.

A grand bow to the Christmas Planning Committee who helped prepare for the holiday festivities:

Theresa Woerz, Terri Morris, Jolene Hines, Sherrie Huffman, Kelly Kissel, Donna Mesker, Amber Barnes, Alicia Majors, Cathy Barnes, Natalie Corum, Therese Lautner-Uebelhor, Melissa Williams, John Sakel, and Allyssa Vittitow.

Leisure Activities Help Pass Time

Danny has fun with paper. “I’ve been making things out of paper since 1998 to mostly pass time. I enjoy making things out of newspaper. More recently I’ve been using colored paper.” Danny is known to make a wide array of items—bracelets, necklaces, crosses, dice, boats, trains,

maypoles, and carousels. He has even treated a nurse or two on his unit with fun paper hats.

The wide variety of leisure programming throughout the year helps patients develop new hobbies and interests. What better way to beat the winter blues than with lots of activity!

The game room is open during the week for card games, checkers, and chess. You might find patients

working on a jigsaw puzzle, playing video games or coloring. The game room serves as a nice social gathering place.

Patients can join basic and advanced art classes. Activities in these classes may involve making homemade greeting cards or a variety of paper mache projects. The

large tree sculpture in the main lobby is etched with the hospital mission and is one example of a large group art project. Many patients find that they can draw and paint with just a bit of instruction— everything from abstract drawings to still life pieces.

Music classes are offered for patients to relax and enjoy easy-listening and gospel music. Music is encouraged as a wellness tool to improve one’s mood. Therapeutic drums and hand bells involve class participants in rhythmic music therapy.

Other leisure skills taught at ESH are sewing, knitting, and crocheting. At this time, sensory books and rag rugs are being made from denim blue jeans and t-shirts of all colors. Feel free to contact Community Services if you have jeans or shirts you’d like to donate.

Lastly, the library is a popular place for those who love to read. Patients can check out books and mp3 players on a weekly basis. All these noted leisure activities enhance one’s life by exercising the mind so that passing time can be enjoyable and rewarding.



Before the cold weather set in, volunteers of the Southwest IN Master Gardener Association cleaned out the garden beds at the circle entrance and near the capstone marker. Pictured are Mike & Kay Haller; excluded from the picture is Kenita Ball.





Veterans Memorial Rededication

It was a beautiful fall day for an outdoor celebration. Among the gathering for the rededication of the Veterans' Memorial on November 10th were numerous ESH employees, patient veterans, members of the American Legion Newburgh Kapperman Post #44, and employees of FA Wilhelm Construction Company. VFW Regional Chaplain Tom Verkamp was on hand to give an invocation. Jeff Wedding, Director of Operations for the IN State Psychiatric Hospital Network gave a brief history of the Veterans' Memorial and recognized the service of hospital veterans. Staff in attendance included veterans Steven Adams, Andrew Lancaster, Brad Malin, Bruce McNeill, Gary Fortner, and Chase Hinton.

Superintendent Gene Schadler and Bruce McNeill, Physical Plant Director shared comments recognizing veterans' service and the importance of the memorial on campus.



Jeff Wedding, Director of Operations-IN State Psychiatric Hospital Network stands with Brian Keith, Operations Manager- FA Wilhelm Construction



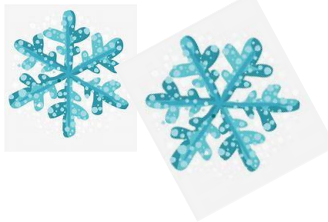
Honor Guard members (Ralph Newman, Walt Kalesia, Ken McWilliams, Stephen Kissinger, Kenneth Head) of American Legion Newburgh Kapperman Post #44 are pictured while Bruce McNeill, Physical Plant Director, raises the United States American Flag.

Welcome

Tammy Woods, Nursing Service

Goodbye

Kiona Alvis, Nursing Service
 Sara Gipson, Nursing Service
 Donna Johnson, Nursing Service
 Ann Kautzmann, Nursing Service
 Denise Lowenhaupt, Health Information
 Brad Malin, Physical Plant
 Donna McBride, Nursing Service



David Osborne, Continuum of Care
 Kenneth Park, Nursing Service
 Heather Quinn, Nursing Service
 Ben Sarabia, Nursing Service
 Chris Taylor, Nursing Service
 Jeremy Thorpe, Housekeeping
 Michael Todd, Nursing Service
 Debbie Wilson, Continuum of Care
 Melissa Woodcock, Fiscal Management

