

# NEWS RELEASE

June 22, 2014

For immediate release

For more information, contact: Jessica Davies at (308)760-6492

## Employee wellness making great strides at Chadron Community Hospital

When Chadron Community Hospital's wellness committee was recently asked what positive effects their wellness program has had, Cheryl Abegglen, RN touted, "We have a culture of healthy eating."

Abegglen added, "We have worked diligently to provide healthy items in our refrigerated vending, the salad bar options in our cafeteria have been well-received, and we provide healthy food options at any meetings or trainings."

"It's been trial-and-error at times," chimed Diana Lecher, Wellness Coordinator and Home Health/Hospice Director, when recounting the humorous time healthy chicken salad wraps were placed in the refrigerated vending only to find they would fall apart like exploding bombs when dispensed.

Healthy eating isn't the only improvement being made at the hospital. Their wellness program is having an impact on their overall health outcomes, too. The hospital formalized the wellness program in 2010 and the latest health risk assessment data shows employees are eating more nutritiously and exercising more frequently. Employees at high-risk for developing diabetes, a costly and devastating disease, dropped by almost 10% in the past year alone. This is a huge success considering research shows employers spend on average \$4,413 more annually for employees with diabetes compared to employees without.

**Employees at high-risk for developing diabetes, a costly and devastating disease, dropped by almost 10% in the past year alone.**

Lecher affirms the success of their wellness program as a combination of strong leadership support, committed management, and a wellness committee comprised of a variety of hospital employees. Proven health promotion practices through programs, policies, and other supports assure the longevity of the employee wellness mentality.

A healthy message is waiting for you around every corner in the hospital. Walking routes are posted at each facility, fitness equipment is available for employee use, and regular challenges provide ongoing employee engagement. The hospital has offered programs like National Diabetes Prevention Program to employees as a support for helping lose 5-7% of their body weight (roughly 15 lbs. on a 6 foot tall, 220 pound male).

July 4<sup>th</sup> has been deemed a true “Independence Day” as the hospital transitions from a smoke-free to a tobacco-free campus including chew and e-cigarettes.

“The transition to a tobacco-free campus seems like an obvious switch to reinforce the success we have had with our smoke-free policy and supports,” Lecher said. “Our tobacco rates have dropped to a 9% usage rate among employees, less than half of Panhandle and national rates of 17-20%.”

---

**“Our tobacco rates have dropped to a 9% usage rate among employees, less than half of Panhandle and national rates of 17-20%.”**

Diana Lecher, Chadron Community Hospital

---

Harold Krueger, CEO committed worksite wellness as “one of the best benefits we can give to our employees and to our own future.” He goes on to say, “If we can keep our employees disease free the benefits become immeasurable to both the employee, their family and to our workforce. A

healthy employee is a happy, productive individual who casts the wellness glow onto other employees and the patients that we serve.”

Chadron Community Hospital is a member of the Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council and Diana Lecher is on the council advisory committee. For additional information about worksite wellness contact Jessica Davies at 308-487-3600 ext. 101 or visit [pphd.org/pwwc.html](http://pphd.org/pwwc.html). The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is a division of Panhandle Public Health District in partnership with Scotts Bluff County Health Department. The council offers extensive membership benefits to help build evidence-based worksite wellness initiatives for local organizations.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.