

HEALTHY LIFE

Child's health meet set

A community meeting is planned for Thursday, Dec. 16, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Barrett Hospital's Professional Services Building basement conference room to assess children's needs in Beaverhead County and in Montana.

The meeting will give an opportunity to discuss and discuss a children's legislative agenda to be represented at the 2005 Montana Legislature when it convenes early next year in Helena.

Community representatives will have an opportunity to meet with local legislators and other community leaders to discuss the

status of children in the area. There will also be an opportunity to discuss issues of importance to mothers, children and families across Montana.

Topics will include health issues such as tobacco use, access to health care for children and families, access to dental care and highway injury and death issues. Other issues include family security, including foster care and juvenile justice; children's mental health issues and proposals for new revenue. A broad range of early childhood issues will be discussed, including those impacting child and Head Start pro-

grams.

The meeting will be an opportunity to review what is being done for children, what needs to be done and a discussion of the next steps the community needs to take. Everyone who has an interest in children's issues is asked to attend the community meeting on children.

The meeting is sponsored by Barrett Hospital and HealthCare and Beaverhead County Public Health. Statewide cosponsors include Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies; The Montana Coalition and the Montana Council for Maternal and Child Health.



Winners

Winners of the Rosetta Assisted Living spelling bee last week included Joyce Lodge, first, right; Florence Gilbert, left, and Erma Dumas, third, center.

Nursing home visits are important

Sometimes, all it takes to bring a smile to your face or to brighten your day is a visit with a dear friend or family member. Even though some things change when a loved one moves to a nursing home or care facility, other things -- like love, compassion, and the need for human interaction -- stay the same.

Visits with your loved one are very important. The following tips will help make your visits an enjoyable experience for everyone.

Get comfortable with your surroundings

You'll probably see, hear and smell new things when you first visit a nursing home. It takes time to feel at ease in an unfamiliar setting so prepare yourself for your visit.

Skilled nursing facilities are home to many different people. Some people may need to use wheelchairs or walkers while others may look the picture of health, but may actually have trouble with their memory.

Remember that people are unique and have different experiences, and this applies to all those who live in the nursing home.

Just as your house may fill with many people who call the nursing home "home," so think of it as a house full of people, each with a special voice and distinct sound.

Several activities can take place at once in a nursing home and you may smell different things, all at the same time. You might catch the scent of cleaning solutions or air fresheners, cooking from the kitchen and maybe even unpleasant body odors. If the smells bother you, consider moving your visits outdoors if your loved one is able or try sitting in a low-traffic area.

Don't forget your manners

Consider your visit to a nursing home the same as you would a visit to your loved one's home. Although you might sometimes drop by a friend's house unan-

nounced, it is always best to arrange your visits to a nursing home in advance. Call to ask when it is best to visit.

Consider that your loved one may have more energy for a visit at a certain time of day. Use good judgment and try not to plan your visit when you might interfere with rest periods or treatment schedules. Don't forget to check the visiting hours schedule with the staff.

When you visit someone's home, you knock on the door or ring the bell. Do the same at the door to your loved one's room and be sure to ask permission before entering. If your loved one can't respond or acknowledge you, be sure to announce yourself before entering his or her room.

Your visits do not have to last hours or involve a lot of activity. Sometimes shorter and more frequent visits can be as fulfilling as longer ones.

Activities like opening the mail together or sharing a snack can sometimes be just enough.

Promising to visit and not following through can be very disappointing for someone living in a nursing home, so call ahead if you are unable to make a scheduled visit and immediately plan a time to reschedule.

"Can I come?"

Children are full of energy and laughter and their liveliness can be a wonderful change of pace for someone living in a nursing home. According to the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living, studies show that elderly people enjoy seeing children at parties and public activities.

Before you visit, talk to your child or teenager about what to expect. Let him or her know that it is normal to feel nervous. Bring along activities that can help occupy young children if necessary, like books or a puzzle.

During visits, encourage children and your family member or friend to play simple games together like cards or checkers, or to sit and chat about daily activities.

Time spent with an elderly loved one helps him or her feel involved in the family, and in turn, helps children learn about the elderly person's role in the family. Visits can even bring history to life through stories of "when I was young."

Items of interest

You may feel stress about what to talk about or what to do during your visit. To help alleviate those feelings, arrange some activities ahead of time. Put together a bag of items to take with you that includes things like magazines, cards, music to listen to, hand lotion, craft items to work on or pictures to share.

Get to know the staff

Nursing home staff are there to help care for your loved one and to promote a healthy environment. Consider the staff to be part of the "household." They work to get to know and understand your loved one. Try to do the same with them. Talk with and visit them, too. Show your appreciation for their assistance by sending them a note of thanks or offering kind words.

Keep staff informed and ask them questions. If you plan to be out of town, let the staff know and provide them with contact information. If you would like to bring snacks or special treats for your loved one to enjoy, check with the staff first for any special dietary restrictions that may apply. Nursing homes can provide you with assistance. Many homes have family associations or family councils that you can join.

Know the signs of meth use in youth

Knowing about methamphetamine use among young people, what to say and what to do to help stop it are all part of a special presentation this Thursday, Dec. 9 at the Beaverhead County High School Auditorium.

Starting at 7 p.m., the meeting will feature Patti White, a well-known speaker and counselor dealing with the growing problem of methamphetamine use among young people.

Sponsored by the Southwest Montana Chapter of Meth Free Montana, the talk will focus on problems created by methamphetamine use, how to recognize them and how to deal with them in your child.

White will also conduct assemblies in local schools, including BCHS, during the day Thursday.

The public is invited to attend the Thursday night session, and parents are welcomed to attend school assemblies as well. The local chapter of Meth Free meets on a regular basis to help deal with drug-related issues in the area.

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Wishing you the very best of Holiday Cheer now and throughout the New Year!

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Immunization Clinic

Beaverhead County Public Health department has received flu vaccine and will be offering an immunization clinic for flu vaccine on Thursday, December 9th from 9:00-12:00 and 1:00-5:00. This will be a flu clinic only. The following list is the criteria from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) for those who will be eligible to receive vaccine:

1. All children aged 6-23 months;
2. Adults 65 years and older;
3. Persons aged 2-64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions;
4. All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
5. Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities (please include assisted living);
6. Children aged 6 months- 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy;
7. Health-care workers involved in direct patient care; and
8. Out of home caregivers and household contacts of children aged less than 6 months.

The cost of the flu vaccine is \$15.00. Medicare Part B will cover the cost of the flu vaccine. For those who have Medicare Part B coverage, bring your Medicare card with you to the flu clinic.

If you have any questions, please call 683-4771.



Mickey Corr

Parkview Acres Care and Rehabilitation Center

Our son, Michael, has been cared for at a number of institutions since his injury in 1975. We are very familiar with many kinds of facilities. Some provided a good experience and some did not.

Michael has been a resident of Parkview Acres since March of 1999. During that time we have been very glad that we made the move to a caregiver in his hometown of Dillon. We have especially found everyone at Parkview Acres to be cooperative.

The attention Michael receives has increased his quality of life. We have been allowed to be a part of the team that makes recommendations for his health care plan and involvement in social activities. They have not only helped our son, they have helped our entire family.

Jim & Peggy Corr